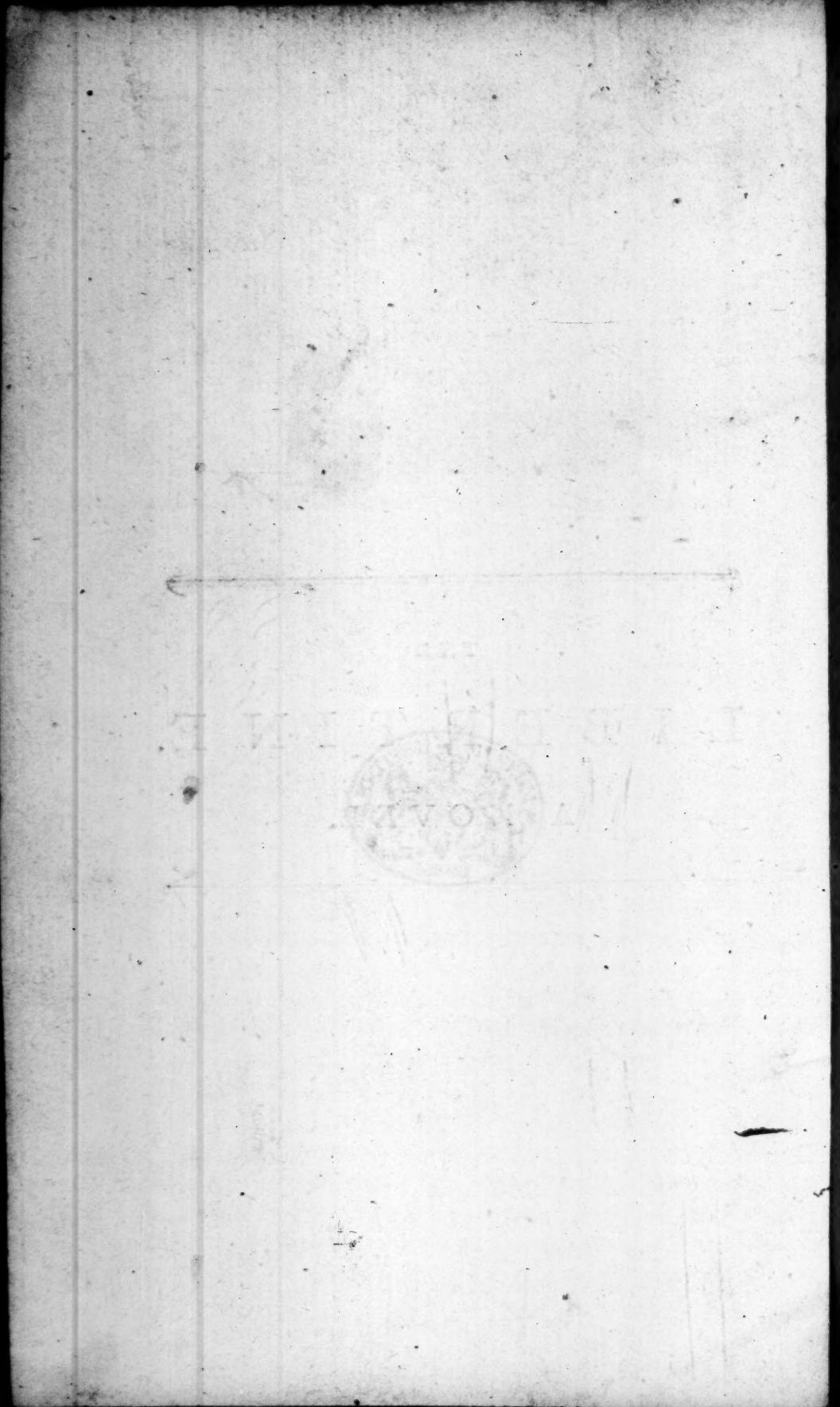


1077.C.11.

THE
LIBERTINE.
A NOVEL.



THE
LIBERTINE.
A NOVEL.

IN A SERIES OF LETTERS.

• By JAMES BACON.

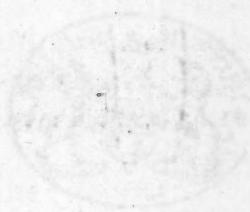
Ye libertines,
Ye lawless rovers, who, to sate desire,
Ravage through all Love's province! can ye find,
Even in that vast variety you prove,
A charm like Virtue?—'Tis the only good,
An emanation of that source of light,
Whose all-creating word from darkness raised
Yon lucid firmament, and bid it shine
With never ceasing lustre.

MARSH'S AMASIS.

L O N D O N :

PRINTED FOR W. MILLER, BOOKSELLER TO HIS
ROYAL HIGHNESS THE DUKE OF CLARENCE,
NO. 5, OLD BOND-STREET.

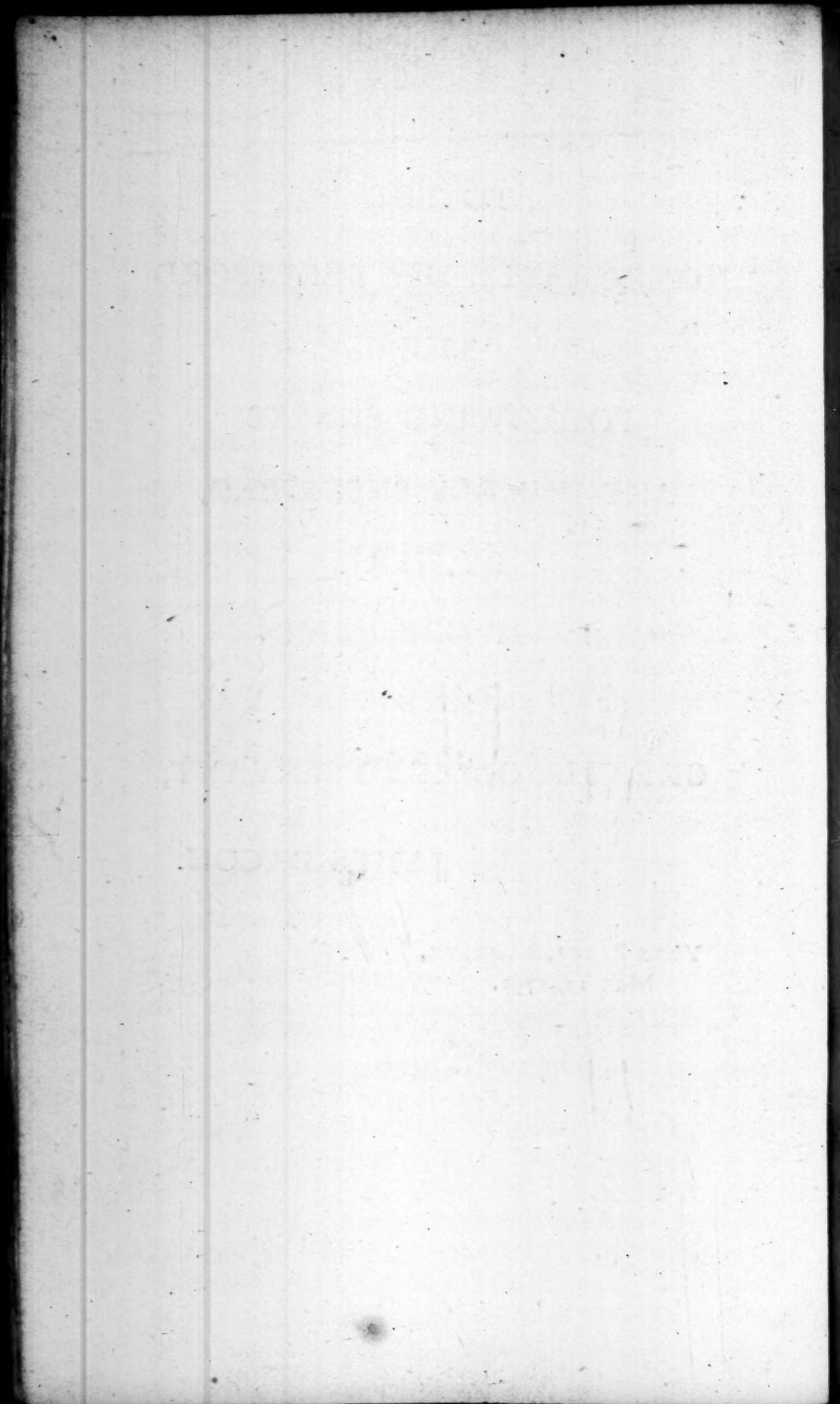
1791.



TO THE
HONOURABLE MRS. BERESFORD
THE
FOLLOWING SHEETS
ARE HUMBLY INSCRIBED,
BY HER
MOST OBEDIENT
AND
GREATLY OBLIGED SERVANT,

JAMES BACON.

YORK PLACE, LAMBETH,
MAY 12, 1791.



P R E F A C E.

THE ensuing pages, being the production of some leisure hours, are submitted by the author to the perusal of an indulgent public, with that consciousness of suspense which the contrary efforts of hope and fear must ever excite in a juvenile author, particularly at the time when he first presents himself to the observation of the literary world.

To check the rapid growth of Vice, and in order to facilitate the ad-

advancement of Virtue, has been the chief design in the following letters; in the arrangement of which, the writer has been desirous of blending amusement with instruction; but, if he has unfortunately failed in his endeavours, it is hoped that the cause, in the interest of which he has engaged, will in some measure compensate for the insufficiency of his performance—and that where he may have erred in point of language, as an author, he trusts that the moral held out to view will, with the candid reader, extenuate his inability.

THE

THE author is aware, that in many publications of this nature too little regard has been paid to probability ; frequently does the hyperbole of fiction usurp the place of honest truth—the modesty of the reader is often violated—and Virtue treated as chimerical, or, by misconception, degraded into Vice. Hence it is, that the more enlightened part of the world are disposed to consider the generality of novels as destructive to Morality, and calculated for the encouragement of those vices they were intended to reprove. But in this production he has been careful to avoid every incident unconnected with

with probability, and has uniformly adopted human nature as his sure guide, from whence his characters are entirely taken.

FOR the first time in his life, the author now presents himself before the dread tribunal of criticism; and happy shall he be, if the majority of his readers be such, “whose generous hearts will give up the reins of their imagination into their author’s bands—be pleased, they know not why, and care not wherefore.”

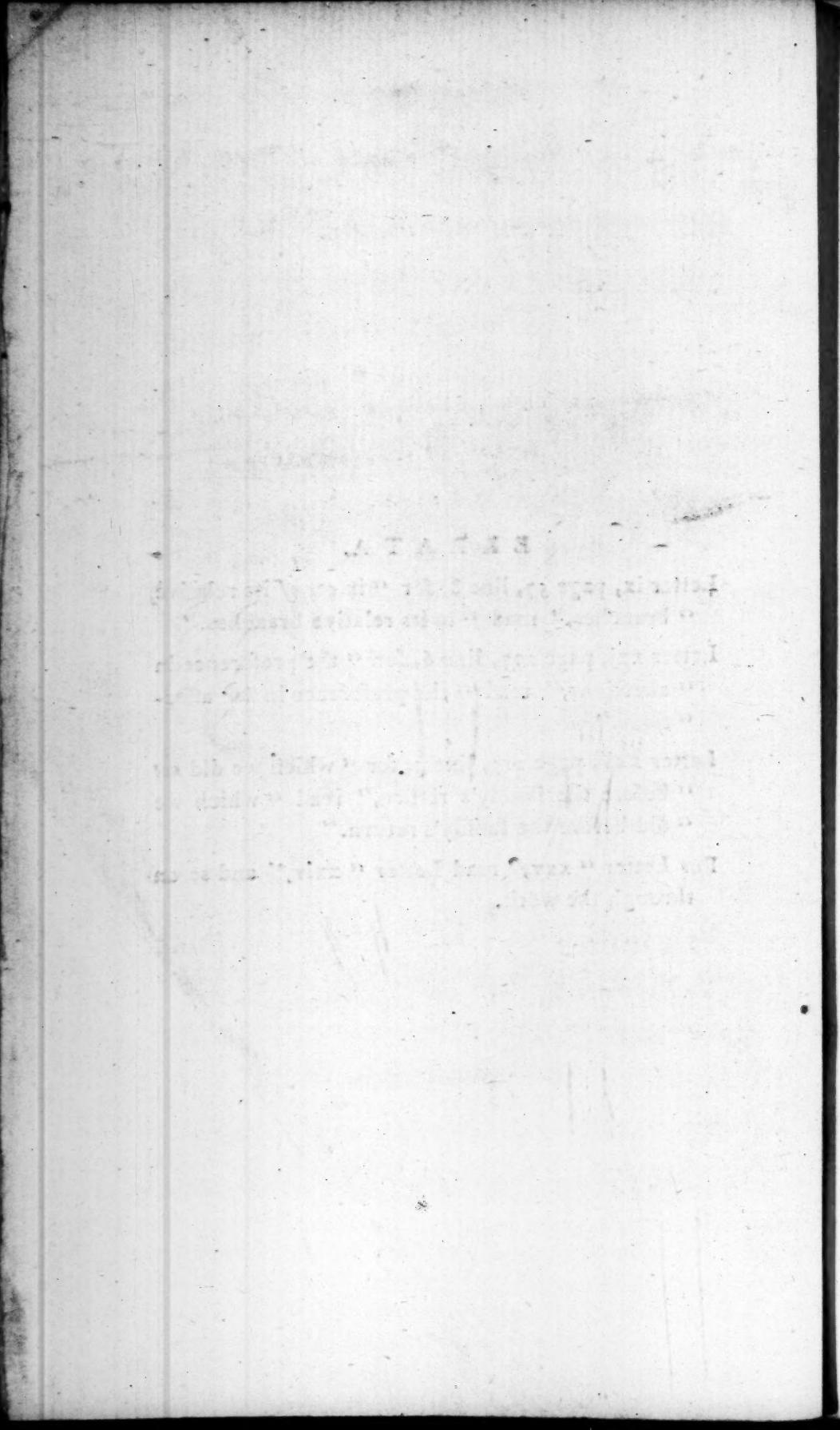
E R R A T A.

Letter ix, page 57, line 8, for “in one of its relative
“branches,” read “in its relative branches.”

Letter xxi, page 207, line 6, for “the preference in
“affections,” read “the preference in *her* affec-
“tions.”

Letter xxii, page 213, line 5, for “which we did *not*
“before the family’s return,” read “which we
“did before the family’s return.”

For Letter “xxv,” read Letter “xxiv,” and so on
through the work.



THE LIBERTINE.

LETTER I.

MR. COURTALL TO MR. BYGROVE.

LONDON.

SINCE my arrival in town, I have had the good fortune to become acquainted with a very agreeable family, with whom I intend to take up my residence during the time I shall continue here.

THE manner in which I formed this connection was very singular; and as

the relation of it may afford you some degree of amusement, I shall make it the subject of my letter.

RETURNING the other day from the Exhibition Rooms, I sallied into an adjoining coffee-house ; and finding my appetite somewhat keen, I ordered the waiter to bring me the bill of fare, out of which I selected such dishes as best suited my taste : and after having sufficiently allayed my hunger, I joined a gentleman, who sat with me in the same box, in a bottle and conversation.

FINDING my companion of a very cheerful and friendly disposition, I acquainted him with my intention of entering the army, and that such was the business which called me to town. I also

also applied to him for assistance, to enable me to provide myself with a temporary habitation; when, to my no small surprise, as well as satisfaction, he made me an offer of his own house on such reasonable terms as could not be refused. I accordingly accompanied him home the same evening, and was introduced to his family as one who was for some length of time to take up my residence among them.

Mr. and Mrs. Friendly (for that is the name of my new acquaintance) I find are included in a circle of friends of great respectability, and that by no means circumscribed: this I impute to that sincerity of manners and hospitable disposition, by which they are so eminently distinguished, and which en-

dear them to all who have the happiness of being ranked in the number of their friends.—Their own family consists of two daughters; the eldest of whom, Narcissa, about the age, as I conclude, of six and twenty, though (by the bye she might well pass at least for six years younger) is indeed a fine woman; but unhappily, like most other fine women, she is too fond of embellishing external graces, to pay much attention to the improvement of internal ones; which, in my opinion, ought to be their first, their chiefest care. I do not mean by this to intimate that Miss Friendly is destitute of mental accomplishments; on the contrary, I believe she possesses a sound understanding and an unimpaired judgment.—The other daughter, Matilda, though not

em-

embellished with the fleeting charms of personal attractions, possesses a mind truly generous, and a heart fraught with benevolence and compassion; virtues which, if we examine their intrinsic value, depress the crimson dye of beauty into poor esteem; and, when the mouldering hand of time shall have crept its gaudy blossom, they will still afford unfaded pleasures.

THUS far I have particularised this family, with whom I find myself agreeably situated.—How can I be otherwise, you will say, when surrounded by such engaging friends?

TOMORROW, from an invitation of Mr. Friendly's, I am to join a party in an excursion up the river as far as

Twickenham; the particulars of which I will give you on my return; till when, as I am too late for the post, I shall defer closing this letter.

* * * * *

[*In Continuation.*.]

WELL! here I am again, Charles, just returned from my nautical excursion.—I do not remember to have spent a more agreeable day; but you will say it was a pleasure dearly bought, when I tell you that my freedom was the purchase.—Yes, Charles; your friend, who has so often ridiculed the name of Love, and satirised the folly of men in becoming slaves to women, finds his hardened heart at length subdued.—Softened by the powerful beams
of

of Beauty's smiles, it now admits of a more tender impression than that of friendship.—Subdued! did I say? No; let me recall the word.—My proud, aspiring soul cannot, will not now yield submissively to a passion, it has hitherto treated with the utmost contempt. It may, in absence of its darling pride, the guardian of its weakness, hold amorous dalliance with the wanton nymph, and yield, awhile, a vassal to her power; but when reflection takes her wonted seat, and again assumes the guidance of the mind, then swift as babbling dreams with murky sleep forsake the torpid couch, so Reason's dawn shall break the spell that thus enslaves me by its magic power.—There rests my hope.—And I am persuaded, unless I am deceived in the knowledge

of my heart, that my judgment does not err.

BUT to return.—In the morning, by six o'clock, the party was assembled in the parlour, waiting, with impatience, my attendance at breakfast.—Of this I had been apprized by the servant.— After arranging my dress, which I was somewhat more than usually particular in adjusting, in compliment to the ladies, of whom the party was chiefly composed, I entered the breakfast room: at that moment a lady, in whom the assemblage of all that is beautiful was centered, caught my attention, and raised in my soul such admiration and surprise, that my bosom heaved an involuntary sigh, and throbbed with emotions till then unknown.

THIS

THIS sudden and unexpected attack upon my resolve to resist the snares of love and beauty, at a time too when I was so ill prepared for the encounter, not in the least suspecting danger lurked so near, threw me into the utmost confusion.—I apologized, but in a very awkward manner, for detaining the company, and in the same style of carriage seated myself on a chair which Miss Friendly had politely handed me.

NOTHING worth recording transpired in the breakfast room, which we quitted with as much haste as the impatience of the ladies could effect, and set out for the barge that waited for us on the river.

THE party was composed of Mr. and

Mrs. Friendly, their two daughters, a Miss Alton (the only child and heiress of the late Sir William Alton, at whose death she was placed under the care of Mr. Friendly), the lady to whose perfections I am indebted for my confusion on entering the parlour, and who, I am fearful, has made too strong an impression on my heart, Mr. Lovemore (whom I have since found to be the admirer of Miss Friendly) and myself.

Mr. and Mrs. Friendly entered the barge first, and Mr. Lovemore and myself severally assisted the ladies.—Miss Alton appeared timorous and fearful. I used all the eloquence I was master of in persuading her no danger was to be apprehended, intreating her to

to suppress her fears in consideration of the attention her friends would pay to her safety, in which I assured her no one could be more interested than myself.

WITH kind reluctance and engaging sweetness she extended her hand, which I with transport seized, and aided the charming, timorous creature into the boat.—

“ So Helen looked,
“ So her white neck reclined, so was she borne,
“ By the young Trojan to his gilded bark,
“ With fond reluctance, yielding modesty,
“ And oft reverted eye, as if she knew not
“ Whether she feared or wished to be pursued.”

A GENTLE breeze unfurled our spreading sails, and smoothly wafted us along the oozy current of the Thames: and soon we reached that happy spot,

where the immortal Pope was wont to strike the tuneful lyre, rousing the groves to melody and love.

HERE we furled our sails, and gained the verdant bank,—Our light-trimmed bark, moored by the river's side, securely rode at anchor, when taking with us our cargo of provisions, and proceeding to a neighbouring oak, beneath its friendly spreading boughs, impervious to the scorching of the mid-day sun, we spread our sober cheer.—Our seat was nature's mossy couch, enamelled with many a wild, but fragrant flower, whose sweetness, borne on gentle zephyrs fluttering from the distant hills, perfumed the ambient air.—Joy hailed our rural feast, and mirth—attended by her jocund train
crowned

crowned the repast. Pleasure sparkled in every eye, and all was peace and harmony, save your unhappy friend; not all the auxiliaries of mirth and jollity could suppress the tumults which the lovely Alton had excited in my breast.

AFTER our refreshment, we took a short ramble up the village, to view the seats of the nobility and gentry situated in those delightful meads, envying the happiness of their owners, and picturing to our imaginations the pleasure that might be derived from the enjoyment of such a paradise.

Too soon the day was gone. The dusky eve assumed her grey attire, and warned us to depart. The gliding bark

bark again received its charge.—And now the tide, whose rapid force had reached its destined course, by Cynthia's power repelled, with equal pace retired, and sought the bosom of the deep, from whence it first emerged. Assisted by its friendly aid, again we reached the welcome shore, and sought the mansion of the hospitable Friendly; where we found a kind repast, which the keenness of our appetites made still more grateful.

THUS ended a day, the most pleasing, perhaps, which I ever experienced, in all the annals of my life.—After the company had departed, your poor, mortified friend retired to his chamber, to communicate this intelligence, and to give you an opportunity of exulting over

over his fallen resolution.—But do not triumph, Charles, with too much confidence.—Ere long my slumbering reason may awake to break this chain asunder, and, armed with redoubled vigour, set again at defiance the fascinating charms of beauty, beneath whose smiles the snares of tyrannizing love are laid, to mislead unwary mortals.

SLEEP, the gentle soother of all care, has not yet forsaken me. I already feel its power, and gladly fly to its embraces; in which the bright Alton's charms, I trust, will lose their lustre, and where I hope their power will be extinguished—for ever!

LETTER

LETTER II.

MATILDA FRIENDLY TO MISS
HOLFORD.

LONDON.

MY dear Clarinda will excuse my remissness in acknowledging her kind invitation to spend a few weeks at Grove-hall, when I tell her the sudden indisposition of her uncle has engrossed the whole of my attention. The kindness of Providence has again restored the best of parents to his disconsolate family, and recalled those domestic joys, which pallid sickness and her ghastly train had driven from our mansion.

THE concern shewn by Mr. Courtall
on

on this occasion must not be overlooked.—Indeed, Clarinda, he is an amiable young man, and is truly deserving the confidence and esteem he meets with in our family.

My friend, Miss Alton, cannot view him in so favourable a light. Our opinions are widely different.—She thinks him too plausible to be sincere; and Mr. Lovemore, I assure you, observes him with a jealous eye.—But this I impute to his excessive fondness for Narcissa, on whom no man can throw a glance without filling his mind with suspicion. I could wish he loved her less; for, to speak with sincerity, I think Narcissa's affection decreases every day. O! Clarinda, my bosom bleeds for this generous young man,
when

when I see his honest passion treated with indifference. But he bears it with great fortitude, and struggles hard with oppressive fate.

I THANK my friend for her kind caution.—I shall not let it pass unnoticed; but I trust my heart is not so weak in resistance as she seems to apprehend. I shall not, however, place too much confidence in its strength, nor run into an evil which I may possibly avoid.

I ACKNOWLEDGE Mr. Courtall's abilities; I admire his virtues; but assure you, my dear Clarinda, I have at present no attachment to his person. My breast cherishes no warmer passion than that of friendship, which his merit entitles

entitles him to, and which he will ever retain, so long as his conduct shall continue to deserve it.

It will not be my happiness to see Grove-hall this summer, but I strongly expect my Clarinda's company in town.
—Adieu.

LETTER

LETTER III.

MR. COURTALL TO MR. BYGROVE.

LONDON.

I ACKNOWLEDGE, Charles, the justness of your remarks. I was never born to be the slave of woman. Not even the transcendant charms of the amiable Alton are able to make an impression on my heart of any long continuance. My attachment to her was nothing more than the effusions of a vivid imagination—a momentary flame, raised by the dazzling lustre of her beauty, and extinguished in the absence of an hour. I shall not, however, resign my pretensions to this lovely girl,
whose

whose partiality and friendship I am ambitious of obtaining, as she will doubtless prove an agreeable companion in the softer hours of indulgence and recess.

MISS FRIENDLY, who is nearly on the point of marriage with Lovemore, has, I perceive, transferred a considerable share of her partiality for that gentleman on me, which in all probability may impede the match. The society of such a woman as Miss Friendly, is too valuable to be refused; and to keep up a good understanding with her, shall not be the least object of my care.

SINCE my last letter, the tranquillity of our family has been considerably disturbed

disturbed through the sudden and alarming indisposition of Mr. Friendly, which proceeded, I believe, from a cold he had taken on the water the other night. I have the pleasure to say he is now entirely out of danger, and the family has again resumed their wonted cheerfulness.

SURE, Bygrove, the marriage state, when productive of such exalted harmony as prevails in this family, is much to be desired. Parental fondness and filial affection are here displayed in their most enchanting colours.—Yet, with such an example before my eyes, and the probability of possessing the most amiable woman in the world, I cannot reconcile to my mind the idea of matrimony.

THE

THE state of celibacy, where like the
changeful bee we rove from sweet to
sweet, tasting the charms of dear va-
riety, where Freedom holds her reign,
and Liberty, thrice happy goddess, ex-
tends her pleasing power; where free
to follow inclination is the mode, un-
restrained by slavish custom, or by ar-
bitrary laws: these considerations, in
my opinion, outweigh by far the shac-
kled pleasures of hymeneal bliss.

You ask me what is become of my
penchant for the blooming Hargrave?
—Why, i'faith, Charles, I cannot tell;
I find myself not in the least affected
in my absence from her; and if by
chance my roving thoughts bring her
to remembrance, the most trifling thing
in

in nature that occurs appears of equal importance, and instantly withdraws my attention.

SOON after my arrival in town, I received a letter from the poor girl, expressive of much apprehension that absence might erase her from my memory: and lest I should forget her, she enclosed, as a memento to my expiring love, a lock of her auburn hair, severed from those ringlets whose negligence and beauty I once so much admired, and which were of late to me the magnet of attraction.

THIS letter, not being attended to in the manner she wished, was shortly followed by a second; and though couch-

ed

ed in different language, breathing the spirit of resentment, was equally expressive of the force of her passion.

I BELIEVE my silence has conveyed to her mind a sense of conviction, which all I could have said or wrote upon the subject would not have been productive of. She tells me she has given up all hopes of retaining me as a lover, and with them resigns all pretensions. Thus then she releases me from any engagement I may have entered into with her (for which I thank her) and leaves me at liberty to prosecute my amours wherever my inclination and humour may invite.

As a moralist, Charles, I know you censure my conduct, but do not cross

my disposition: leave me to the free exercise of my will, and you shall indulge at large your passions, without controul from me.

LETTER

LETTER IV.

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME.

LONDON.

O CHARLES! the luckiest adventure has befallen me that your imagination can conceive. What do you think? But you will not join me in the laugh. You are too great a stoic to enjoy the enchanting pleasures of an amour. Yet I must unfold. The jealous pated Lovemore offended, to use his own expression, "*At the imprudent familiarity of Miss Friendly and myself,*" with unusual sternness reproved his mistress; who tired of his love, and weaned in her affection, with indignation heard

his vile reproof, and contemptuously discharged him for ever as her lover ; peremptorily commanding him never to approach her again in that character ; and having pronounced this heart-apalling sentence, left him to enjoy at leisure the sudden effects of his too well grounded suspicions.

INSTANTLY she flew to my chamber to relate to me the story. This was a fortunate opportunity for effecting the design I long had entertained of declaring my dissembled love, and I was determined not to let it pass. The event exceeded my utmost expectation. The dear girl made no hesitation in confessing her passion, but fearing a discovery, and to prevent suspicion, after mingling a few fond kisses, returning some

some endearing embraces, and exchanging mutual vows of constancy and truth, we parted for the present, with a promise to meet again in the evening.

How just was Hamlet in exclaiming,
“*Frailty, thy name is woman!*” How applicable in the present instance! And yet with these examples of their mutability you persist in vindicating the sex and strongly recommend their society as an antidote against sublunary care. Indeed, Charles, were you as well acquainted with them as I am, you would then become their censor, not their advocate. But different men incline to different objects, and each is actuated by some particular passion. ’Tis mine to watch the fair, to mark their errors, and detect their crimes.

You have other employments, doubtless, more pleasing to your temper, and perhaps more instructive to the mind. You pursue the establishment of virtue, I the detection of vice. Thus then our pursuits, though different in form, are mutual in effect. For I conceive the impeachment of the one to be the improvement of the other. But enough of argument, as it is not likely to bring conviction to either mind; for in despite of it, each will incline to its own opinion.

THE time draws near for meeting my mistress, who must not yet be neglected. Much business lies upon my hands. Matilda's smiles have thrown the glove, and it were cowardice not to accept the challenge: nor must the charming Alton
be

be forgotten; if my heart is capable of receiving an impression, she has effected it. The task is hazardous, but then the conquest will be the greater—

“ Obey me, features, for one supple moment,
“ Ye shall not long be tortured.”

LETTER V.

MR. LOVEMORE TO SIR CHARLES
SEYMORE.

LONDON.

AT a time when the fatigues of the day render sleep a necessary as well as an agreeable companion—when the peaceful cottager “*forgets his care, and lays him down to rest,*” the unhappy Lovemore, a stranger to its soothing power—his mind oppressed with all the horrors of a hopeless passion—inflamed with anguish, torture, and despair, sets himself down to impose upon your friendly ear the agony of his love-sick soul.

OH,

OH, Seymour! Why was I born with the soft, impressive feelings of sensibility, to struggle with a fate so hard? Had nature, when she formed me, thrown her eye upon the pages of futurity, and viewed the sufferings to which I am doomed in the theatre of life, she surely would not have cast me in so soft a mould.

CAN you think, will you believe the assertion, that Narcissa, the once gentle, kind Narcissa, that dear author of my pain, at once my transport and my grief—she on whom my soul doated with such extravagant fondness, in whom my every joy was centered, whose very foibles by me were held as lesser virtues, captivated by alluring beauty, or more specious art masked in

friendship's veil—can you believe she
flies the affection of her constant Love-
more, and unrelenting yields him a prey
to the pangs of despised love?

" Let there be no honour
" Where there is beauty. Truth where semblance,
" love
" Where there's another man. The vows of women
" Of no more bondage be, to where they are made
" Than they are to their virtues, which is nothing.
" O, above measure false ! "

IN my cooler moments of reflection, when the passions of my mind have subsided into a calm, I have searched the inmost recesses of my heart, brought to mind each look, word, and action; but in none can find any thing that might offend. Why then, 't's plain, fickleness of temper in her, and not offence in me, has caused this luckless change.—And shall I unrelenting yield

a victim to caprice? Heavens! where is fled that inborn pride, that jealous guard of virtue inherent in the soul, that was wont to start at man's injustice, and oppose the lawless outrage of oppression? Where, indeed? Shrunk into dastard fear by beauty's power, and, passive, bears a woman's scorn!

IN vain I strive to banish from my thoughts the lovely image of the woman I adore. Too strongly is my passion implanted in my heart, for mouldering time itself to erase. Where then, Seymour, may be found the medicine that has power to allay the poignant anguish of despised love? Where the philosophy to support the mind under this oppressive burthen? Unsupported, it droops beneath the pressure of its woes,

woes, alive to preying, never-ceasing torture, till sunk in death, the last kind refuge of its expiring hopes, it finds a shelter from all earthly pain.

COME back, ye smiling hours of innocence and peace, that hailed our infant loves, when all was joy and happiness around, without one anxious care to cross our mutual pleasures; when, unseduced by wily art, the kind Narcissa with unaffected modesty returned my love, and hung with fondness on my breast: return, ye light-winged hours, and with your halcyon smiles appease the tumults of my woe-worn mind; let me rivet my attention on the transient bliss ye once bestowed, and pore with fond delight upon each rising joy, that then entranced my soul; do

ye

ye engage my thoughts, nor suffer me
to reflect on the luckless moment, when
my love-sick, weary bark, by adverse
fortune driven, so late was wrecked on
the unfriendly shore of disappointment
and despair.

IT will not be.—Injured Affection
stares me in the face, and fiery Anger,
red with rage, calls aloud for recom-
pence; while Reason, with persuasive
mildness, kindly points with warning
hand; and Hope, sweet smiling cherub,
pours the balm of comfort on my
wounded mind.

To Hope and Reason, then, kind
soothers of distress, I will henceforth
look up for comfort: and their friendly
aid incessant will invoke, till the en-
slaving

slaving passion, love itself, shall be enslaved. Then shall I rise superior to the caprice of fickle woman, and triumph over ungrateful beauty's scorn.

ADIEU! Write, Seymour; assist my tottering resolution, and save from shame your greatly injured friend.

LETTER

LETTER VI.

MR. BYGROVE TO MR. COURTAUL.

BEACH-GROVE.

“ What does
“ It profit us, that we from heav’n derive
“ A soul immortal, and with looks erect
“ Survey the stars, if like the brutal kind
“ We follow where our passions lead the way ? ”

THE expression of the poet, in these beautiful lines, conveys a pointed satire on those men, who suffer the gratifications of their passions to subdue the rectitude of their hearts. Happy would it be for them, if they attended to the dictates of the latter, more than to the insinuations of the former. Virtue then would flourish in the sunshine of prosperity, and the storms of adversity would

would be considerably abated. Happiness would then extend its grateful blessings to the breast of each individual, and the foundation of nature be freed from the sappings of intemperance.—The line of conduct which you are now pursuing would, in that case, meet your ideas with the same force of horror as it now does mine; and you would doubtless recede from any farther indulgence of your inordinate desires.

As a friend (a real one I mean) I shall not, through a misguided partiality, restrain my thoughts on the pernicious tendency of your conduct; nor will I dread, by a candid censure of it, incurring your displeasure.

FOR-

FORTUNE has placed you in a family, the leading traits of whose conduct, you do not hesitate to confess, are benevolence, hospitality, and friendship: the peace and harmony of which you are bound by the ties of gratitude to promote, to protect it from all invaders; and not to act the ungenerous part (to give it no severer epithet) which you are meditating, to take advantage of the weakness of nature in the relative branches of it, and to endeavour to kindle in it the spirit of discord.

How from my heart I sympathize the sufferings of the injured Lovemore! and how much I despise the mutability of her which causes them! Reflect, George, on the probability of rendering a deserving man for ever miserable.

Think,

Think, how meretricious will be your offence; how poignant the reflection, when levity no more shall guide your actions, and reason again return to her long neglected home! Compare this with the short-lived pleasures you promise yourself from the completion of your licentious wishes, and I think the native goodness of your heart, if the powers of vice have not totally extinguished it, will arrest your wild career.

THE character you have given me of Matilda has impressed on my mind a strong partiality in her favour. She must, doubtless, be very happy in the possession of so amiable a disposition; and I trust her tranquillity has nothing to fear from the insinuations of love, when

when veiled in falsehood's garb. Her good sense will enable her to detect the cheat, and her exalted virtue will spurn with just contempt at the base assaults which vice would offer it.

THE charms of Miss Alton, I find, have made an impression on your heart, sufficient, I hope, to awe you into virtue, to check the ardour of your licentious passions, and bring you back a proselyte to justice. But should you, deaf to reason's voice, and callous to the feelings of humanity, pursue your vile designs, the proud, ungrateful Narcissa will feel, at last, the injustice of her conduct. Shame, remorse, and guilt will shortly become her chief companions: for when once, and I fear the time is not far distant, you shall have
robbed

robbed her of the richest jewel of her soul, you will instantly yield her up to the poignant stings of sorrow and remorse. But, alas! the sad effects of your baseness will rest not here. The tender parents' hearts must also feel the envenomed dart of anguish, and mourn too late their ill-placed confidence. Their home will no longer be the mansion of peace: grief, despair, and horror will then take place of domestic bliss, and banish from their breasts each dearer joy. How will they execrate the author of their pain, and curse their own credulity, that cherished in their unsuspecting bosoms the serpent that gave the fatal wound! And when the vengeance of angry heaven shall lower o'er your head—when with uplifted arm injured justice shall be ready to give
the

the dreaded blow, the due reward of your iniquity—then, too late, yourself will rue the dire event, and curse your own imprudence.

To these reflections I leave you; and let me at the same time remind you, that
“*the consciousness of another man’s errors*
“*can never be a justification of our own;*
“*and poor, indeed, must that wretch be,*
“*who can be satisfied with the negative*
“*merit of not being the worst man he*
“*knows.”*

LETTER

LETTER VII.

MISS FRIENDLY TO MISS HOLFORD.

LONDON.

AT length, my dear Clarinda, I have got rid of what to me is the greatest torment in the world, a jealous lover, and am again at liberty to aim at fresh conquests. Women were born to captivate mankind; and, were they all of my temper, they would not be satisfied with a single slave, but extend their conquests over as many as their charms could subdue.

O! it is to me unspeakable pleasure to see a set of fools sighing after, and fol-

following one to every part of the town; begging your acceptance of a card for such a ball, intreating your company to such a play, and, in short, letting no amusement pass without gratifying one with the enjoyment of it. Such are the pleasures that have charms for me. You will excuse, Holford, my levity: I know it does not accord with your domestic disposition; but at this moment I am in such spirits, so happy, and so lively, that I can think of nothing but my conquests.—One I have already insured.—Yes, yes, the gay, the sprightly Courtall is become my admirer. He has confessed his passion, and urged so forcibly his suit, that I could not withhold declaring my partiality for him.—This I impart in confidence, and I trust,

trust, my friend, you will preserve inviolate the sacred charge.

My father and mother reprobate my conduct towards Lovemore: my mother, you know, was always partial to him. Matilda calls me ungrateful; and Miss Alton compassionates his sufferings. Thus, you find, he has many advocates; but my own determination never more to accept him in the character of a lover, effectually baffles their arguments in his favour.

MR. COURTALL is a man of most exquisite beauty; and I am well aware, that when his penchant for me shall be more generally known, I shall have many envious rivals, who will leave nothing

thing undone that may withdraw his affections. We have, therefore, mutually agreed to conceal, for the present, our fondness for each other, that we may enjoy uninterrupted the felicity arising from a mutual flame; and I promise you, Clarinda, if I find my lover sincere in his attachment, I will be grateful enough to return his love, and confine myself to him alone.

I CANNOT omit mentioning my suspicions, that Matilda and Miss Alton are secretly attached to Courtall; and I am the more confirmed in this opinion, from their interference in favour of Lovemore; as a reconciliation between us, would afford them a more favourable opportunity of attracting his notice.— The small pretensions Matilda has to

such a man I need not mention; nor is any comment on Miss Alton's vanity necessary to one who knows her so well as you.

MISS ALTON writes by this post: her letter, I imagine, will be replete with invectives against me; you know she is inclined to be censorious, and will therefore be guarded against her expressions.

LETTER

LETTER VIII.

MISS ALTON TO MISS HOLFORD.

LONDON.

AT length, Clarinda, the storm that so long has lowered over us, is burst. The unhappy Lovemore now lives the slave of his unsuccessful passion. Narcissa has for ever banished him.—Mr. and Mrs. Friendly, who are disconsolate on the occasion, have in vain endeavoured at a reconciliation. Matilda and myself also joined in the unsuccessful attempt. But Narcissa remained deaf to our intreaties, and apparently exults in the success of her ingratitude. She now aims a conquest elsewhere;

and I strongly suspect she beholds the object of it in Mr. Courtall. Here too, I fear, that poor Matilda is attached too strongly, to enjoy that serenity of mind she was wont to possess.—

“ Alas! how oft does goodness wound itself,
“ And sweet affection prove the source of woe.”

THAT blind partiality which the whole family discovers for this man must, I am sure, have conveyed to you the idea of a most amiable character: but believe me, Clarinda, he is not what he seems.—Dissimulation is his leading passion: and they will find, too late perhaps, that, instead of cultivating a merited friendship, they have been nourishing the destruction of their own peace. Time alone will prove or falsify my suspicions; and, as I have no authority

thority to arraign their conduct, I shall forbear to treat any farther on the subject.

WHEN does my friend bestow her hand on Belfield? I expected before this to have had a summons to attend you to the court of Hymen.—Why do you delay the happiness of that generous youth? Do not, Holford, trifle with his passion; his sincerity cannot be deservedly rewarded, but in the possession of the virtuous Clarinda.

I SHALL hold myself in readiness, and impatiently wait the event. May it be crowned with that happiness your virtues deserve!

LETTER IX.

MR. COURTALL TO MR. BYGROVE.

LONDON.

THE particular marks of attachment, which your conduct has at all times discovered towards me, and the disinterested concern that on all occasions has so amply displayed itself in your actions for my welfare—a friendship the more valuable, as it is unconnected with any selfish views, motives by which modern friendship is in general actuated—an attachment habituated by personal acquaintance, and confirmed by an implicit confidence of the rectitude of my heart, palliates the severity of your rebuke,

buke, and stifles in my breast that indignation, with which conscious innocence is ever prone to treat the reproaches of ill-grounded suspicion.

How the enlightened mind of the generous Bygrove could so far desert its wonted candour, as to turn what is meant as an innocent piece of gallantry into premeditated seduction—how the friend, the companion of my infant years, the partner of my thoughts, could so far forget that sense of honour, which his bright example and friendly precepts early implanted in my heart, and which he has so often admired in the full exertions of its powers, even amidst the intemperate sallies of youth—how he could be so forgetful, I say, as to harbour for a moment the disingenuous

thought, much less the belief, that, deaf to its remonstrances, I could boldly violate the laws of hospitality, and basely design the destruction of my friend's happiness, by seducing the offspring of his conjugal felicity, I am at a loss to determine. But it has been observed, and I believe the observation meets with almost general credit, that men are not themselves at all times; that great minds will sometimes descend to trifles, which, at others, reflection would blush to confess. In one of these moments it was, that candour languished in the soul of Bygrove; when, seizing the opportunity, suspicion usurped her power, and what the former meant in gentle accents to admonish, the latter meanly and ungenerously traduced.

THE high sense of obligation which I entertain of Mr. Friendly's hospitality will ever prompt me to guard his honour "*from all invaders,*" and to aim at the improvement, not the diminution, of his and his family's happiness; and though I "*trifle with the weakness of nature in one of its relative branches,*" I have no design to "*kindle in it the spirit of discord.*"

THE coquettish disposition of Miss Friendly I despise as much as you possibly can, and equally sympathize with you the sufferings of Lovemore; but I must differ from you in the opinion, that I have been in the least accessory to their dispute. If Miss Friendly is partial to me, I used no dishonest means to obtain her good opinion. Her va-

nity I shall humour; and I confess to you that I have no other motive in declaring for her a passion, which it is impossible she can ever inspire me with, than to make a farther progress in discovering the frailty of that sex, in whose behalf you are so passionate an advocate, and to insure to myself an agreeable companion.

You are mistaken in imagining that Miss Alton has completed the conquest of my heart. The mind of Matilda, enriched with every grace, has at present a stronger claim to my partiality, than the boasted charms of the beauteous Alton, whose temper and disposition I have not yet been able to discover: and believe me, Charles, if ever I marry, I will take a woman, whose mind

mind shall be adorned with every social virtue, in preference to the attractive graces of a handsome face. The one, the mellowing hand of time will ripen to still greater perfection, while every care to preserve the other will not extend it to any thing farther than a short-lived blossom. The happiness arising from an union with the one will last so long as we continue enamoured of virtue; while the pleasures looked for in the possession of the other will gradually, or rapidly, decline, as its lustre shall diminish.

YOUR old friend Belfield is going to lead to Hymen's altar a lady, an intimate acquaintance of the Friendlys and Miss Alton: her name is Holford, and report speaks her an amiable woman.—

Matilda and Miss Alton are invited to the wedding; the day is fixed for Thursday next, and the place Grove-hall, the residence of the lady. Miss Alton officiates as bride's maid, and Sir Charles Seymour, with whom Lovemore, the discarded admirer of Miss Friendly, is now on a visit, is to attend the bridegroom. I suppose, Charles, you will be of the party; if so, you will have a favourable opportunity of contemplating the charms of the fair Alton, and the virtues of the engaging Matilda. I need not caution you to guard your heart against this combination of worth and beauty; it possesses too much the frozen coldness of the Anchorite to admit any other emotions than those of reverence and respect.

THE short time allowed me to close this letter in, before the post leaves town, will not permit me to add any thing more, than that I hope, before this has reached you, reflection will have brought to your mind a more favourable opinion of my honour, than what your letter is expressive of, and that you are convinced you were too rash in the application of your censure.

LETTER

LETTER X.

MISS ALTON TO MISS HOLFORD.

LONDON.

MY dear Clarinda has at length, then, consented to make the generous Belfield happy.—The whole family unite with your friend in the approbation of your choice.—You say that a gentleman of the name of Bygrove, a friend of your lover's, is to be present. I have too great an opinion of Belfield's good sense, to think he would select from society a man undeserving his esteem; or that he would own an attachment for any person, before he had first proved him worthy of his confidence.—

This

This same Bygrove is the epistolary correspondent of Courtall; but I must not judge from that, that his principles are the same. He may be deceived in his choice; for in friendship, as well as in love, Courtall may be a hypocrite. That he is in the latter, I shall endeavour to prove by disclosing a few circumstances which have come within my own knowledge.

IN the early part of the evening, about an hour before sunset, I usually walk at the bottom of the garden, along the avenue leading to the summer-house, for the purpose of perusing uninterruptedly some entertaining author. With this intent, I yester-evening visited this favourite retreat, in which I had not long remained, before my meditation

ditation was disturbed by the conversation of Miss Friendly and Mr. Courtall, who, it seems, to prevent a discovery, had met in this place to disclose their passions.—Narcissa's language gave vent to all the fiery rage of jealousy; while Courtall mildly endeavoured to appease, what he termed, her ill-grounded fears.

I HAD the mortification to find myself, in conjunction with Matilda, the object of her suspicion; and heard myself exclaimed against in the most bitter invective by the one, and most contumuously derided by the other. Matilda also shared the same fate as myself, save that of being a local witness to their injustice.—Mr. Courtall, with all his eloquence, and he is master of a considerable

able share, was scarcely able to persuade his mistress that her suspicions were entirely groundless, and it was with difficulty that he appeased the turbulence of her mind. After much labour he however effected it, and brought her to view him as the faithful votary of constancy and her.

AT this juncture a footstep was heard in the adjoining walk, which occasioned the precipitate separation of the lovers: for I learnt from their discourse that their amour was to be concealed, till the rupture between Narcissa and Lovemore were in a great measure forgotten.

THE footsteps that aroused the amiable pair were those of Matilda, who
was

was straying pensively towards the alcove, to indulge her love-sick thoughts, and soothe with hope the torments of her breast. I had by this time seated myself in the summer-house, and from a crevice in the wainscot could view the enamoured maid.—A settled melancholy pervaded every feature, and involuntary sighs, together with fond affection's tears, confessed the labouring anguish of her heart. She sat upon the mossy bank, reclined her head upon her snowy hand, and looked a living monument of woe.

“ She never told her love,
“ But let concealment, like a worm i’ th’ bud,
“ Prey on her damask cheek : she pined in thought,
“ And with a green and yellow melancholy,
“ She sat, like Patience on a monument,
“ Smiling at grief.” —

Thus appeared the hapless maid !

ON

ON a sudden, as if resolved to banish from her mind the cause in which her grief originated, she tuned to melody her long neglected voice, and sung with admirable sweetness

" How sweet the love that meets return ! "

HER voice, it seems, had reached the ears of Courtall: for scarcely had she ended, before he entered the alcove, and, bowing respectfully, complimented her on the melody of her voice and judgment in singing.—Matilda arose, returned the compliment with a low curtsey, and blushed at being so unexpectedly, though agreeably, surprized.

You, Clarinda, have doubtless experienced the sudden transition, from the pangs that absence occasions, to the joy
a lover's

a lover's presence affords, and can therefore conceive Matilda's sensations better than my pen is able to describe them.—Her eyes, no longer clouded with despair, sparkled again with their wonted lustre: the sullen sadness, that veiled her countenance, gave way to the smiles of conscious pleasure, and her whole form, so late absorbed in languid melancholy, seemed now invigorated with vivacity and joy.

COURTALL artfully introduced the subject of Narcissa's dispute with Lovemore, which he handled in a masterly manner, and removed from the mind of Matilda the faintest suspicion she might entertain of his being in the least the cause of their separation.—He slightly reproved the conduct of Narcissa, and made

made many judicious remarks on the mutability of her temper.—On Lovemore he bestowed every encomium due to the sincerity of his passion and the urbanity of his manners, and hoped soon to see him again in the possession of his mistress's affections ; adding, that he should esteem himself peculiarly happy in being in the smallest degree instrumental to their speedy reunion.

MATILDA appeared highly delighted at the apparent sincerity of Courtall, and frankly confessed, that till that moment she had looked upon him as the sole author of the breach between her sister and Lovemore.

" WERE your own thoughts," said he, " the only ground for suspicion ?

" Or

“ Or was it the secret whisper of some
“ seeming friend, that imposed upon
“ your ear the forged tale, to sink me
“ in your family’s regard, and rob me
“ of the greatest blessing I ever yet
“ possessed, their friendship and es-
“ teem?”

“ No, on my honour,” replied Ma-
“ tilda, “ the thought existed but in my
“ own imagination.”

“ No, Matilda,” said Courtall, with
a look the most expressive that I ever
saw, and in a tone of voice, the magic
harmony of which would have moved
the most obdurate heart, “ had Narcissa
“ been free as air, and disengaged from
“ all the world, transcendant as are her
“ beauties, I then, as now, had viewed
“ them

“them with indifference. My heart,” continued he, “prizes charms more lasting than the fleeting rays of beauty, transitory as the painted rainbow, which lives but in the pearly drops of a summer’s shower, and then is seen no more.— Yet, think not, sweet maid, I live a stranger to the soft sensations of love: no, Matilda, even at this moment I bow submissive at the shrine of beauty, but am more subdued by the lasting graces that adorn the mind of her I love.”

“AND are you successful in your attachment?” said Matilda, with an eagerness that betrayed her concern.

“TILL this moment,” replied Courtall, “I have worn my pain concealed
“from

" from all; nor till this present hour
" did an opportunity, congenial to my
" wishes, ever offer to disclose it; and
" now that fortune gives it to my reach,
" my resolution sinks through fear, nor
" dares to arrest its flight." Then
placing himself before her, " To spare
" my confusion," said he, " would I
" were a mirror, that Matilda might
" behold the lovely image of her I
" adore."

MATILDA was silent; her eyes were fixed upon the ground, and her face covered with blushes.

I COULD contain myself no longer; but, rushing from my privacy, I entered the alcove as it were by design.—Matilda started with surprise; and

Courtall,

Courtall, whose countenance was the title page of guilt, stood fixed and motionless. He endeavoured, but in vain, to speak. My presence, so unexpected, and so unwished for, his own thoughts, and the apprehension of detection, all conspired to encrease his confusion.—He bowed, and retired.—Matilda threw herself on a chair, and burst into tears.

"OH! Clarissa," said she, "how unhappy, how wretched I am!—Pity a weakness, which I find I cannot conceal.—Mr. Courtall has declared he loves me; and at the moment my yielding heart was going to return his vows, you —

"RUDELY interrupted," said I,
"rushed

“rushed in upon you, and saved you
“from the snare his artifice had laid
“for your credulity.—O! Matilda, my
“friend, think me not too officious; I
“heard his faithless vows with horror,
“and could not suffer myself to let
“your unsuspecting heart become the
“victim of his treachery, without en-
“deavouring to save you from destruc-
“tion.—His vows of love to you are
“false as the tears of the dissembling
“crocodile, and as dangerous; they are
“but the stale professions which he has
“offered to Narcissa.”

“To Narcissa!” she exclaimed, with
great agitation.

“Yes, Matilda,” I replied, “to
Narcissa.—But come, let us to our
“chamber;

“chamber; your looks are pale, and
“your spirits much ruffled; endeavour
“to compose yourself, and when we
“are in private I will disclose to you
“this mystery.”

I THEN led her to her chamber, and related to her the discovery I had made between Courtall and Narcissa, together with every attendant circumstance, to the time when I entered the alcove.—The recital much affected her; she complained of indisposition, and retired to bed.—In the morning she was somewhat better, and now appears perfectly composed. She cannot, however, be prevailed upon to see Courtall, though he has made several attempts. She confines herself closely to her room, under pretence of prepar-

ing for her journey to Grove-hall, and attends the family only at table.

COURTALL appears much disheartened, and Narcissa is by no means satisfied as to his conduct.—In our absence, perhaps, they may be upon better terms.—He looks upon me as the cause of his being debarred the sight of Matilda, and at all times is careful to avoid me.

THIS, Clarinda, is the picture of a man, who is esteemed by this family for his innocence and integrity.—A bad indication this of his virtue.—Adieu, my friend; on Sunday you may expect us.

LETTER

LETTER XI.

MR. COURTALL TO MR. BYGROVE.

LONDON.

CURSE on my unhappy stars! into what a dilemma am I plunged!—Would I had been born an Anchorite, alike insensible to the impressions of beauty and of love, so that I had escaped the torments of my inflammatory passions!

Oh! Charles, such an accident has befallen me, such a misfortune, that at once threatens to blast the harvest of my promised joys, and mar the future progress of my amours.

FORTUNE makes me her very sport; one moment she raises me on the pinions of swift-winged pleasure, and the next she plunges me into the abyss of despair. Yesterday, indulgent to my wishes, she gave me the company of the fair Matilda. The wished for opportunity to declare my passion I embraced with rapture: but mark the caprice of the changeful deity—when I had softened the fair one's heart, and won it to my seeming love, the divine Alton (for though she is cruel, she is still divine) crossed me like an evil genius, and, in the moment when success had nearly crowned my hopes, hurled me headlong down the craggy precipice of cruel disappointment.

My confusion at this unfortunate interruption

terruption robbed me of the power of speech, and under the greatest embarrassment I withdrew.—I know not what has passed between the two friends, but Matilda has ever since been private, and all my endeavours to obtain an interview have proved abortive.—Why should she avoid me? She cannot, surely, have been apprized of my amour with her sister! — Should that have transpired, I am ruined past redemption.—But how, or when, or where?—It cannot be.—Narcissa is sworn to secrecy; and yet I know not how far her vanity may have prevailed upon her to disclose it.—But then her reputation would suffer from such a step.—How foolishly do I suffer imagination to distress me!

MISS ALTON is become more than usually reserve, and Matilda, I fear, is lost for ever.—Fool that I am, to be thus tormented at the frowns of a woman, or to suffer my temper to be ruffled by disappointment! I must overcome this weakness, or my pleasure will ever be embittered with care.

ON Sunday Matilda and Miss Alton set out for Grove-hall, to attend the celebration of your friend Belfield's nuptials with Miss Holford.—You, Charles, I am informed, are to make one of the party: give me an account of the ladies, particularly of Matilda; if I am ever to be reformed, she only has power to effect it.—Adieu.

LETTER

LETTER XII.

MATILDA FRIENDLY TO MISS
FRIENDLY.

GROVE-HALL.

AFTER a very tedious journey, in which we were exposed to the most imminent danger, Miss Alton and myself arrived safely at Grove-hall, escorted by two servants in handsome liveryes, with which the politeness of a gentleman, who providentially saved us from the hands of a ruffian, provided us.

THE circumstances are briefly thus :
—An accident having happened to one

of our horses, we were obliged to stop at a small inn on the road, till we could procure another, to enable us to proceed on our journey, which, after much difficulty, we effected.

THIS delay made it necessary for us to borrow a few hours of the night, which was rendered less unpleasant in having the benefit of the moon.—When we arrived within three miles of the place of our destination, we perceived at a small distance from the road a very superb building. The driver was ordered to stop his horses, that we might have a better view of it: while we were thus amusing ourselves, a man rode up to the coach, and, presenting a pistol, demanded our money. Miss Alton screamed and fainted, and scarcely was I able

I able to preserve my spirits. I, however, collected what money I had about me, and was about to give it, together with my watch, to the robber; when a gentleman mounted on a spirited steed came up to us, and, perceiving our situation, drew from his pocket a pistol, and fired at the ruffian: he, finding himself wounded, rode off full speed, at the same time discharging his pistol at the gentleman, whose arm unfortunately received the contents.

THE report of the pistols roused Miss Alton; she raised her head, but seeing a person near the carriage, imagined it was still the robber, and she again fainted. The courteous stranger humanely assisted in restoring her, and,

after we had convinced her of her safety, she ventured to look up.

CLARISSA perceiving the wound, the gentleman had received, to bleed very fast, took from her pocket a handkerchief, which she bound round his arm. At this time two servants, whom he had outrode, came up: to their care he committed us, and desired they would see us safe to Grove-hall, whither we had informed him we were going; and after apologizing for not being able to attend us himself, and wishing us a safe journey, he rode towards the house we had been admiring, without informing us to whom we were indebted for the preservation of our lives and property.

Miss

MISS ALTON, during the remainder of our journey, was warm in the praise of the courteous stranger, and made many impatient enquiries of the servants, who their master was: but it was a secret they might not disclose.—This circumstance occasioned still greater quietude in the breast of Clarissa, who, I believe, is strongly prepossessed in favour of this unknown personage.

WHEN we had reached Holford's, the servants immediately left us, and rode away with great speed, without giving us the least intimation who or what their master was.—Clarissa and myself are unanimous in opinion, that he is a person of rank. We have made no enquiries since our arrival here, owing to the hurry and bustle of
the

the family in their preparations for the wedding.

WE were received with that cordiality which is ever attendant on real friendship.—Clarinda looks charmingly, and is in great spirits.—Belfield is both polite and agreeable as ever, and appears passionately fond of his mistress, who returns his love with equal ardour.—To-morrow will complete their happiness.—Among the company expected, are Sir Charles Seymour, Mr. Lovemore, and Mr. Bygrove, the friend of Courtall.—The particulars of the day shall be the subject of my next letter; till when—adieu.

LETTER

LETTER XIII.

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME.

GROVE-HALL,

TO fulfil the promise I made in my last letter, of giving you the particulars of the wedding, I have stole privately from our entertaining company, to dedicate a few moments for that purpose.

By six o'clock in the morning the sprightly Belfield was at the door of his bride's chamber, and awaked her from her pleasing slumbers by the harmony of his voice—

"Ye blooming virgins, have you seen"—

which

which he executed in a masterly manner.

AFTER a short time spent at the toilette, Miss Alton and myself accompanied the bride down to the breakfast room. Belfield, who had been more expeditious, arrived there before us.— He rose, and saluted Clarinda, and, handing her to a seat, paid the same compliment to Clarissa and myself.

AT this moment an elegant carriage, drawn by four beautiful grey horses, decorated with ribbons, and attended by two footmen in embroidered liveries, drew up to the door. The servants immediately announced Sir Charles Seymour and Mr. Lovemore.—On their entering the room, guess at the

sur-

prise of Miss Alton and myself, when we saw, in the person of the former, the very man who had so gallantly rescued us from the hands of the robber.

HIS wounded arm was hanging in a sling of crape; the appearance of which drew from the family an anxious enquiry into the cause.—Sir Charles immediately turned to Clarissa and me, who were standing on the opposite side of the room, and, bowing very low, said, “ Those ladies can best relate the “ history of my misfortune.” He looked passionately at Clarissa, and again bowing, added—“ The accident, “ ere this, had been lost to my remem- “ brance, had not a wound of a more “ dangerous tendency preserved it in “ my mind.”

THIS

THIS sufficiently accounts for the secrecy of the servants who attended us to Holford's; they undoubtedly received their instructions from Sir Charles, whose confidence of meeting us again, reserved the discovery of our deliverer for himself.

CLARISSA blushed at the declaration of Sir Charles; the eyes of all present were fixed upon her, and an impatience to be informed of the circumstance was visible in every countenance.—To relieve her from this embarrassment, I called the attention of the company by relating the affair that brought us to the knowledge of Sir Charles. Every one was loud in the praise of his courage and humanity, and we received

ceived the congratulations of our friends on our fortunate escape.

WHEN this had passed, Mr. Love-more saluted us. He made many friendly enquiries relative to the family, among which he ranked the "*unkind Narcissa.*" He has not benefitted, I think, from his country visit; his spirits are much dejected, and it is in vain he strives to conceal his melancholy.

THE next arrival was that of Mr. Bygrove.—Of this gentleman I have much to say: he is, Narcissa, the reverse of Courtall, and I am at a loss to think how two men, so opposite to each other in every point of view, can live on terms of intimacy. His person is
manly

manly and dignified ; his address pleasing and easy ; his language graceful and agreeable, and his manners polite, affable, and engaging, which his friends say are only equalled by the goodness of his heart. He is indeed very attentive to me; for which, Mrs. Belfield says, he has some other motive than mere politeness, and she would persuade me the man is fallen in love.—But I am got into a vein of digression, and have nearly lost sight of the subject that first engaged my pen : to return, then—

As soon as we had finished breakfast, the bride and bridegroom, attended by Mr. Holford, Sir Charles Seymour, Mr. Lovemore, Mr. Bygrove, Miss Alton, and myself, followed by a vast course

course of people, set out for the church in the following order :

IN Mr. Holford's carriage, the bride, Miss Alton, and Mr. Holford; in that of Belfield, Sir Charles Seymour, and himself; and in Sir Charles's, Mr. Lovemore, Bygrove, and myself.— Clarinda went through the ceremony with better spirits than I expected.— This ended, we returned to Mr. Holford's, to dine, where we were met by several neighbouring families, who had received invitations to the wedding.

IN the evening we had a ball, which was opened by Sir Charles and Miss Alton. Mr. Lovemore danced with the bride, and Mr. Bygrove favoured me with his hand. The other gentle-
men

men present selected ladies from the rest of the visitors. At three o'clock we broke up, and all the company returned to their respective homes, except Sir Charles, Mr. Lovemore, and Bygrove, who still continue with us.

TOMORROW we are to dine at Sir Charles's. He has invited us to spend a few days with him; but Mr. Bygrove is under the necessity of returning home on Sunday, and Lovemore sets out for London the same day; I mean to accompany him. Miss Alton goes home with the new couple, with whom she will probably stay some time. Sir Charles is certainly enamoured of her; nor is she, I believe, at all averse to him.—Such a union as this, from the mutual excellence of their dispositions, cannot

cannot fail of being productive of the most exalted harmony. That such an event may take place, I sincerely wish.

THERE is an air of seriousness in Bygrove, that touches upon melancholy, and which made me at first sight believe that something of importance was revolving in his mind. He informs me he intends visiting London in a short time, and has asked my permission to see me there. You will, perhaps, Narcissa, imagine from this, that I have made a conquest. Whatever my good friends here may insinuate, I cannot impose upon my heart such a belief; and its sensations, if at all allied to love, are centered in some other object.

You

You will pardon me, my dear sister, if I mention Mr. Courtall as an admirer of yours. I am afraid, Narcissa, he has made too strong an impression on your heart. Be guarded, therefore; nor suffer your credulity to become the dupe of a man, whose sentiments and actions are in every respect congenial with libertinism.—Adieu.

LETTER

LETTER XIV.

MR. BYGROVE TO MR. COURTALL.

GROVE-HALL.

THE joyful period, to which I have long looked forward with such anxious hope, that was to give to me the presence of the fair Matilda, is at length arrived.—O George! how faintly did you pourtray the charms of this transcendent maid! Her mind is the seat of virtue, and her voice the melody of love, that searches the remotest avenues of the heart, and every artery expands. An amiable sweetness diffuses itself through her every action, and claims the admiration of all. Her vivacity

dispels the gathering clouds of care, and inspires the grief-worn breast with joy. Her form, indeed, where each captivating grace with perfect symmetry combines, would absolve the Anchorite's frozen heart, and warm his soul to love. Mine, softened by the nobler lustre of her virtues, already spurns the mere frigid ties of friendship, and pants to call its feelings by a softer name. But, oh! I must despair of ever implanting in her breast a partiality for me. You, George, are too formidable a rival; your superior attractions have subdued her heart, and rendered it incapable of returning the fondness of another.

BUT tell me, Courtall, with the candour of a real friend, do you indeed
love

love Matilda, or are your professions there also dissembled? If they are real, I have too much regard for her happiness to interrupt your joys, and solemnly declare never to behold her more; though, to banish her from my thoughts, will ever be impossible. But if they are feigned, I earnestly entreat, nay, I must insist, that you urge no farther your guilty passion, but yield to me the chance of winning her affections, on the success of which depends my future happiness.

AT this moment my passion is a secret to Matilda, and for me will ever remain so, unless your answer is friendly to my hopes. I wait with impatience to receive it, and trust I shall not suffer from suspense.

- THE disappointment you met with in your declaration to Matilda, and which has given you so much inquietude, ought to be considered fortunate than otherwise, as it will afford you an opportunity of consulting your heart on two essential points:—the reality of your passion, and the impropriety of feigning an attachment you are conscious you do not feel.

THE sentiments, George, entertained of you by those who have observed your conduct with an attentive and inquisitive eye since your residence in London, I have canvassed with much inquietude, and find them congenial with my own apprehensions. The task, to reclaim deluded virtue, is hazardous, but it is the office of friendship; and as

I feel

I feel for you that passion real and undissembled, I cannot behold you rushing headlong into ruin, without an attempt to save you.

THE paths of libertinism, though smooth and pleasing, lead to sure destruction; and to explain more fully the truth of the remark, and to enforce upon your mind a just sense of conviction, I have subjoined, for your perusal, two short fragments; the melancholy catastrophes they contain are within your remembrance.—Reflect on them with seriousness, nor despise the counsel friendship offers. Implant in your mind the fate of Lothario, and let it henceforth warn you of your future conduct.—Emulate the virtues of Ben-

volio; sympathize the misfortunes of Lavinia; and let pity pay the mournful tribute of a tear for the sufferings of Arnaldo.

LAVINIA,

OR THE SEDUCED FAIR.

A FRAGMENT.

“ HAPLESS Lavinia!” exclaimed Benvolio, as he passed the grave of that injured fair. “ That once lovely form, so late our admiration, is now no more; lodged in the dreary mansions of the dead, it sleeps secure from ills, and in the icy arms of death finds a refuge from the violence of her cruel spoiler, man.—Oft have I seen the blooming maid just risen from her downy pillow, with cheeks that shamed the crimson dye of morn,

“ and eyes whose lustre foiled even the
“ dewdrop glistening at sunrise in the
“ hawthorn spray: yes, oft have I seen
“ her, with unsuspecting thought hastening
“ to meet the gay, the lively, false Lo-
“ thario; and often, too, with jealous
“ eye I have seen the base seducer clasp
“ the lovely girl in all the rapture of
“ unfeigned love, and heard his tongue
“ with flattering arts proclaim the purity
“ of his heart; a heart that, while it
“ adoration feigned, concealed the base
“ design of robbing the innocent of her
“ soul’s rich treasure—her virtue.”

SOME nine moons now had wan'd,
when envious time proclaimed to the
world her lover's falsehood, and her
own disgrace. In vain she claimed the
promise of redress; the ruthless spoiler
views

viewed her with unpitying eye, and loathed that beauty, which had fired his soul to seek its ruin. A niggard, paltry boon was all the hardened wretch would offer, save the harsh charge, the cruel, barbarous charge, of her never seeing him again.

GRIEF and a sense of honest indignation suppressed the powers of speech; and, turning from her base seducer and his wretched proffer, she sought, with slow and melancholy step, the mansion of her aged sire, bedewing her wan neck with the tears of sweet repentance—the sweetest offering to indulgent Heaven.

THE good old man beheld afar his child's approach, and with paternal

fondness hasted to afford a grateful welcome.—Lavinia shunned his kind embrace, and, falling on her knees, exclaimed, “ O! let not this sad, guilty
“ form pollute thy honest arms. Be-
“ hold, thou injured parent, behold the
“ wretch, whose crime has fixed a stain
“ upon thy fame, which contrition the
“ most severe can never wipe away.—
“ Lothario, the base, designing, false
“ Lothario, in whom my credulous
“ heart and thy unsuspecting soul had
“ placed such unbounded confidence,
“ has ill repaid thy friendship and my
“ injured love. My virtue and my
“ honour are fallen, sad victims to his
“ seeming truth. Even now I left the
“ perjured wretch, who, with a heart
“ steeled against my sorrow, and deaf
“ to my complaints, has spurned me
“ from

“ from him, like a loathsome weed, and
“ charged me never to behold him
“ more. My tottering limbs have sadly
“ borne me hither; but it is the last sad
“ office I shall ever require of them.
“ My beating heart forebodes, I cannot
“ long survive; I came but to implore
“ thy fatherly forgiveness, and then to
“ close my sorrows in the friendly
“ grave.”—Here nature stopped her
course, and lifeless at his feet the luck-
less maiden fell.

“ NAY, rather,” said Arnaldo, stoop-
ing to raise her from the ground, “ let
“ me ask of thee forgiveness—I, who
“ am the wretched cause of all thy suf-
“ ferings.—Had I, Lavinia, watched
“ thee with a parent’s care, thou hadst

“ still escaped this evil, and we had
“ then been blest. Look up, Lavinia,
“ and seal my pardon, ere thou diest.
“ It is in vain I ask; the pulse of
“ life is ceased, and, with it, all her
“ sorrow. Curse on the false Lotha-
“ rio! Let angry Heaven pour down
“ its fiercest vengeance on his guilty
“ head. Would it were my lot, to be
“ the instrument of its wrath! but na-
“ ture’s powers are languid all; my
“ feeble spirits give warning of ap-
“ proaching dissolution. I come, La-
“ vinia, my child, my injured child,
“ I come to join thee in the cold
“ embrace of death.”—Then falling
on the just expired maid, the venerable
Arnaldo breathed his last.

OFT

Of^r by lonely contemplation led, the generous Benvolio sought their peaceful graves, and watered the turf with many a grateful tear of sympathy and love.

LOTHARIO'S

LOTHARIO'S FALL.

A FRAGMENT.

WHAT time the sun's declining beams had tinged with gold the western sky, and Philomel's melodious strains had sung a requiem to departed day, Benvolio sought the lonely grove, to indulge his soul's sad melancholy, and mourn Lavinia's wretched fate ; for he had loved the beauteous maid, ere false Lothario beguiled her easy heart. Modesty and diffidence, the sure attendants on sincere affection, suppressed too long the mention of his love. Lothario, the handsome, gay Lothario, stepped before

before him, and bore off triumphantly the envied prize. Too generous to disturb their seeming bliss, he strove to check the ardour of his flame, and bore his pain concealed. Yet still he loved the maid; and oft he stole behind the hawthorn thicket, or the woodbine's shade, to view the blooming fair.

THE grove now reached from either bank, that teemed with nature's richest gifts; the gentle youth each fairer floweret culled, sweet emblems of Lavinia's charms, and wove a chaplet, to adorn her urn; which as he twined, he washed with the tears of sad remembrance. This done, his footsteps pointed to the sacred spot, where slept the idol of his soul, in death's cold slumbers, blest with undisturbed repose.

THE

THE distant landscape glimmered beneath the moon's pale orb, and night had over the world her dusky mantle thrown. 'Twas silence all, save where the stately pines waved their towering heads in gentle whispers to the passing gale—or where the babbling stream, winding its lonely current through the vale, sent forth soft murmurs to the watchful moon—when at Lavinia's tomb Benvolio kneeled, to grace with Love's fond rites her daisy tufted grave.

“ Sweet flower,” said he, “ with
“ whose beauty these collective charms
“ of nature could but faintly vie, cropt
“ by an untimely hand, ere thou per-
“ fection's height hadst reached, accept
“ this latest gift of love; and if thy de-
“ parted spirit can view me from the
“ realms—

“ realms of bliss, look down with pity
“ on Benvolio’s sufferings, who loved
“ thee living, with unabated ardour,
“ and who still cherishes thy memory
“ with increasing fondness; look down,
“ fair saint, and hear Benvolio’s vows.
“ —By yon fair heaven, and all its
“ starry host I swear, thus kneeling
“ swear, to avenge thy sufferings, and
“ bring to shame the author of thy
“ wrongs—the false, detestable, per-
“ jured! —But hold—what unwel-
“ come footsteps this way bend, to in-
“ tercept my love’s unfinished rites?”

“ Say, what is he, who at this late
“ hour disturbs with unavailing grief
“ the quiet of the dead?” exclaimed
Lothario, as he approached the tomb.

“ Lo-

“ LOTHARIO, by all my hopes of
“ revenge!” said Benvolio. “ What
“ mischief working fiend,” he cried,
“ has conjured up the false Lothario’s
“ hated form? Comes he to triumph
“ over his spoils, or to mourn the fate,
“ the wretched fate, of lost Lavinia?—
“ Wouldst thou expiate thy crime here,
“ on the injured fair one’s tomb, yield
“ up thy life. Offended justice claims]
“ it, and Lavinia’s wrongs cry out aloud
“ for vengeance.”

“ Thy rage, Benvolio,” returned Lo-
thario, “ savours much of madness, and
“ therefore, esteeming thee a madman,
“ I hold it prudent to avoid thee.—
“ Some future time, when thy spirits
“ shall have gained their wonted calm-
“ ness,

“ ness, we will resume this theme. Till
“ then, farewell.”

“ HOLD, Sir,” said Benvolio; “ this
“ is but a mean shift, to avoid my
“ chastisement. The injuries of the
“ fair Lavinia have indeed disturbed
“ my quiet, but not impaired my sense.
“ Come, Sir, if thou hast courage, draw
“ thy sword, and acquit thee of the
“ crime wherewith I have charged thee
“ Nay, you stir not, till I am answered.
“ —What! has thy guilt made thee
“ coward, as well as villain?”

“ VILLAIN!” exclaimed Lothario;
“ another such a word, and my rage
“ will mount beyond the power of rea-
“ son, and dash thee headlong to thy
“ kindred earth.”

“ If,”

" IF," returned Benvolio, " in the vocabulary of human knowledge there was an epithet more hateful, I would give it thee; for thou art doubly a villain, coward, traitor, that basely triumphed over unguarded innocence."

" I WILL hear no more," said Lothario. " This at thy heart," drawing his sword, and thrusting at Benvolio.

" AND this at thine," returned Benvolio, " for Lavinia's wrongs."

LOTHARIO fell, and with him fell the generous, brave Benvolio.—Such was fate's decree.—Lothario groaned with the agonizing torments of instant dissolution, implored forgiveness of offended

fended Heaven, and in strong convulsions ended his existence.—Benvolio survived him but a short time: some friendly hand had borne him home, where, after repeating the melancholy tale, forgetting the pangs of death in the pleasing hope of being shortly united with his loved Lavinia, he gently breathed his last.—

“ Then cracked the cordage of a noble heart,
“ And choirs of angels sung him to his rest.”

LETTER

LETTER XV.

MATILDA FRIENDLY TO MISS ALTON.

LONDON.

THE impatience my kind friends at Grove-hall expressed, on my departure from thence, to be informed of my arrival in town, claims the employment of my first moments, and I cheerfully dedicate them to that purpose.

MR. LOVEMORE and myself, after an agreeable and safe journey, reached London about an hour before dinner. He politely ordered the carriage to drive to our house, where he set me down. I pressed him to alight; but my

my entreaties, aided by those of my father and mother, could not prevail upon him to accept the invitation: he has, however, promised to pay us a visit in the evening.

MR. COURTALL, I find, has obtained his commission; the addition of a scarlet coat and feather makes him appear irresistible.—Oh! Clarissa, what a pity that such beauty should hide a cankered heart!—Narcissa's eyes sparkle with pleasure when she beholds him, and betray the emotions of her heart; every sentiment she delivers, and every action she performs, confesses her fondness for the dissembling man.

A COLD salutation passed between us on my arrival. The indifference, with which

which he seemed to view me, gave me, I confess, much pain, and I retired to my chamber, to vent my sorrow. A flood of tears afforded me considerable relief; and, after reflecting on the impropriety of indulging a passion that threatened to destroy my peace, I resolved to meet his scorn with equal pride.

NARCISSA has confessed to me she loves him (a confirmation I hardly needed), and intimated Courtall's intention of soliciting my father's consent to their union.

“ POOR, deluded girl!” I exclaimed, unable to conceal any longer my indignation. “ Had you, Narcissa, the knowledge of the dissembling wretch,
“ that

“ that I possess, your pride, if not your
“ virtue, would treat his arts with scorn.
“ His love for you, his friendship for
“ the family, and his professions of es-
“ teem, are feigned all; the mask of
“ villainy, and corruption’s veil. His
“ vows of love to you are perjured in his
“ protestations to me. Base wretch!
“ was it not enough to withdraw your
“ affections from the injured Love-
“ more, to effect your eternal separa-
“ tion, but, to give his ingratitude a
“ deeper dye, he must impose upon my
“ ear the self-same tale, and, doubtless,
“ too, with equal sincerity.”

“ THAT Mr. Courtall,” said she, with
a sneer, “ has paid you the attention of
“ politeness, I am apprized of; but for
“ any thing farther, child, you could

“ hardly suppose yourself capable of
“ effecting. If you have unfortunately
“ placed your affections on the *Captain*,
“ and misconstrued his natural affability
“ into love, you would do well, to sup-
“ press your passion; for be assured,
“ Matilda, he has no inclination to be-
“ come an admirer of yours”—and im-
mediately quitting the room, ran down
stairs, and stepped into a coach with
Courtall, which had been waiting to
carry them on an excursion of pleasure,
leaving me to reflect on her friendly
admonition.

YES, Clarissa, I will follow her ad-
vice, and banish from my thoughts this
image of deceit. The generous By-
grove’s friendship claims an interest in
my heart, and deserves attention. His
affection

affection shall wean my soul from its amorous fondness, and blot from my memory every faint remembrance of my hapless passion.

AND now, my dear Alton, let me congratulate you on your conquest of the worthy Baronet. Mrs. Belfield's suggestions, I believe, were nearer allied to truth, than I at first imagined. I need not, Clarissa, caution you against the cruelty of sporting with his passion; he has gained too great an ascendency over your heart, to suffer you to play the tyrant; and I am sufficiently aware, that you despise a disposition inclined to indulge in the levity of a pert coquette.

THE family unite with me in the most cordial professions of esteem for the amiable pair, and the rest of our good friends at Grove-hall.—Adieu.

LETTER

LETTER XVI.

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME.

LONDON.

LAST night Mr. Lovemore, agreeable to his promise, favoured us with his company. It was the first time my father had seen him, since his succession to the estates of the late Lady Lovemore, his aunt; and he took this opportunity of congratulating him on that event.

“ ALAS! Sir,” said he, “ what are
“ riches, pomp, and grandeur, that man-
“ kind so much admire, when peace and
“ happiness are so rarely found within

“ their dwellings; their possessors oft
“ carry with them but the semblance of
“ pleasure, while corroding pain rankles
“ at their hearts. The addition of
“ riches cannot bestow happiness on
“ me, nor remove from my mind the
“ cloud of anguish that now overspreads
“ it. Ere while it was, no change of
“ state could have disturbed my peace;
“ nay, not the chilling blasts of poverty
“ could have robbed me of my bliss,
“ had I but retained the affections of
“ Narcissa; having lost them, I have
“ lost every thing that deserves my
“ care; and wealth, which other men
“ esteem a blessing, is to me what the
“ richest dainties are to a sick man, that
“ pall upon the taste, and, while they in-
“ vite, deny enjoyment.”

“ COME,

“ COME, come, my friend,” said my father, “ study it not so deeply.—Wo-
“ men are like Fortune, which must be
“ closely pursued, to be obtained.—
“ When lovers quarrel, it is a sure sign
“ they love each other. My word upon
“ it, Narcissa loves you still; and if her
“ affections are estranged for a time, it
“ is that they may return with redoubled
“ ardour.”

“ I SHOULD but deceive myself in
“ such a thought,” said he. “ When
“ Narcissa smiled upon my love, I
“ thought my happiness complete, nor
“ felt my heart a pang from care; then
“ every moment, coursing on the downy
“ wings of love, was fraught with joy;
“ now, sad reverse! grief, despair, and

G 4 “ wretch-

“ wretchedness succeed, and lade each
“ lingering hour.

“ WHEN first I trod the mazy paths
“ of love, Prosperity bestowed her
“ cheering smiles, and led me through
“ the flowery vale of pleasure; anon
“ Adversity, with rude and boisterous
“ force, expelled my pleasing guide, and
“ left me friendless on her barren waste;
“ where wandering, a distressed and
“ wretched fugitive, Fortitude beheld
“ me with a piteous eye, stretched forth
“ her friendly hand to save me from
“ the precipice of black despair, and,
“ smiling, conducted me to the seat of
“ bliss—to the then gentle, kind Nar-
“ cissa: here, too, secure in thought, as
“ I unguarded lay, the doors of foul
“ suspicion

“ suspicion barred by the smiles of
“ beauty, a treacherous fiend, assuming
“ friendship’s borrowed form, stole on
“ my peaceful hour, tore love’s bloom-
“ ing myrtle from my brow, and placing
“ there the mournful willow, unrelent-
“ ing hurled me to the dank shades of
“ misery and despair; through whose
“ impervious gloom no gleam of light
“ can dart its friendly ray, to guide my
“ lonely steps, and only death can close
“ the scene of woe.”

HERE he paused: the tear of misery started in his eye, and his countenance bespoke the anguish of his soul.

AFTER a pause of considerable length, in which sympathy indulged its passion, the unhappy youth, forcing a look of

composure, resumed the melancholy theme.

“ HERE, my dear friend,” he said,
“ are two instruments, duly ratified and
“ confirmed; by the one, I have ap-
“ pointed you, in conjunction with my
“ worthy friend, Sir Charles Seymour,
“ trustee of my estate, during my ab-
“ sence in Italy, for which place it is
“ my intention immediately to embark;
“ and the other, on my decease, gives
“ the bulk of my fortune to Narcissa.
“ I have no friends to provide for, no
“ dependents of any description, not the
“ remotest relation living; therefore no
“ one can reproach me with the partial
“ distribution of my fortune. This
“ circumstance,” he added, “ I would
“ have held a secret, till I am no more.

“ It

“ It will at least prove my friendship for
“ the dear girl, and convince her no si-
“ nister views were the objects of my
“ pursuit.”

WAS there ever such a display of disinterested love, in the annals of life?— Surely, Clarissa, if my sister retained the least spark of gratitude or humanity in her breast, she could not behold, unmoved, the sufferings of this amiable man.

MY father endeavoured to persuade him from his design of leaving the country; but he advised in vain: he was fixed, and inexorable to all entreaties.

“ I will use,” said my father, “ the

“ authority of a parent, and compel her
“ to be yours.”

“ What !” said Lovemore, “ would
“ you violate her inclinations, and force
“ her to be miserable? No, no, my
“ friend, I cannot approve of such a
“ step. I would not, wretched as I
“ am, accept of happiness on the terms
“ you now propose. I may be unfor-
“ tunate, but never can consent to be
“ dishonourable.”

My father, finding his entreaties ineffectual, relinquished the subject.—The remainder of the time he spent with us, which was very short, was employed in discoursing on indifferent subjects. On taking his leave, he said he would see us again, before he finally left

left England, which, he added, he was too well assured would be the last meeting we should enjoy on this side the grave.

A FEW minutes after his departure, Narcissa and her admirer returned.—Courtall only staid to pay his respects, and withdrew.—An interesting conversation took place between my father and Narcissa ; but, alas ! neither persuasions nor threats were able to make any impression on her mind.—Finding her obstinate to his wishes, my father warmly declared he would never give his consent to her union with any other man than Lovemore ; in which declaration he was joined by my mother.

NARCISSA charges me as the author of their displeasure.—How far I am guilty, Heaven and my own heart can best declare.—Adieu.

LETTER

LETTER XVII.

MISS ALTON TO MATILDA FRIENDLY.

GRENVILLE.

THE generosity of the injured Lovemore is a theme which my friend, Mrs. Belfield, frequently joins me in: his sufferings awake in our breasts the power of sympathy, and we sincerely regret his want of resolution to relinquish the remembrance of his unfortunate attachment.

By accident, Matilda, I have revealed a secret, the disclosure of which I intended to have reserved for some distant period; however, I am not concerned

cerned it has escaped me, since it promises to enlarge my share of happiness.

A FEW days since, on our return from Mr. Holford's, where Mr. and Mrs. Belfield, and myself had been to dine, near the grove of elms at the foot of the hill on which Sir Charles Seymour's house stands, we perceived a female, and a servant in livery kneeling on the ground, and supporting a gentleman, who apparently had fainted. Belfield ordered the coach to be stopped, and, alighting, found the fallen person to be Sir Charles Seymour, quite exhausted, and weltering in his blood.— He imprudently exclaimed, that his friend, Sir Charles, had been murdered. The name of the dear man, coupled with murder, had such an effect on my spirits,

spirits, that I immediately fainted, and fell into Mrs. Belfield's arms; in which state I continued for some time. Violent hysterics followed, my whole frame was convulsed, my mind teemed with the most dreadful imaginations, and my tongue, in lofty exclamations, betrayed the dearest secret of my heart.

WHEN I recovered, I found myself in Seymour-house, my friend, Mrs. Belfield, standing at the head of a settee, on which they had placed me, and administering some hartshorn to my temples. Sir Charles was seated by my side, in an easy chair; his right arm was wrapped in a bandage, and holding in his left hand one of mine, which he gently pressed to his lips, and fixing upon me his beautiful blue eyes, that beam

beam with the expressions of love and tenderness, kindly enquired how I found myself; I answered him only in tears, which gave me considerable ease.

A FEW moments after, addressing myself to him, I enquired by what means he had received his accident, and the cause of our finding him in such a melancholy situation. In compliance with my request, he began the following narrative:

“ This evening, taking a solitary
“ ramble round the shrubbery at the
“ bottom of the garden, indulging my
“ thoughts in contemplation of the fair
“ Clarissa, and figuring to my imagina-
“ tion the happiness that might be de-
“ rived from the possession of so amiable
“ a woman,

"a woman, my meditation was interrupted by the approach of a servant, who delivered to me this letter; the contents of which," continued he, unfolding it, "are as follows:

' TO SIR CHARLES SEYMOUR, BART.

' SIR,

' IN the village, a small distance from your mansion, a poor man, Thomas Welford, rented a small farm under Lord Gaylove, who, through a series of misfortunes, has not been able to discharge his arrears of rent. To obviate this difficulty, his Lordship proposed to accept the person of his eldest daughter, as a liquidation of the debt. The honest farmer spurned, with contempt, at the base proposition
' of

‘ of this inhuman wretch, and, rather
‘ than be the pander to his daughter’s
‘ infamy, has suffered himself and fa-
‘ mily to be turned out of doors, with
‘ no more property than a bare suffici-
‘ ency of cloaths to cover them, and
‘ have taken refuge in a small cottage
‘ near the church, inhabited by one of
‘ his labourers.

‘ My inclination to assist this injured
‘ family is thwarted by the want of pe-
‘ cuniary resources; and my knowledge
‘ of the justice and liberality of your
‘ disposition urges me to solicit your
‘ interposition in their favour; a soli-
‘ citation which I am persuaded will not
‘ be fruitless.

HONESTUS.’

“ ON

“ON reading this letter,” continued Sir Charles, “my mind anticipated the horrors of the honest Welford’s situation, and I determined to lose no time in affording him such relief as his distresses required: but, as the night was fast approaching, I thought it eligible, for the defence of my person, to take some safeguard; I therefore walked to the house, and, taking my sword in my hand, desired a servant to conduct me the nearest way to the church, towards which I hastened with no small impatience.

“Passing the grove at the bottom of the hill, I heard a rustling kind of noise, and drawing near to the hedge, in order to discover the occasion of it, I distinguished the faint accents of

“a fe-

“ a female’s voice imploring for mercy;
“ when directing my eye through an
“ opening in the bushes, by the assist-
“ ance of the moon, whose beams, di-
“ rected as it were by interposing Hea-
“ ven, shot through the almost-imper-
“ vious branches, and discovered-a fe-
“ male, overpowered with struggling
“ and resistance, sunk lifeless at the feet
“ of two inhuman monsters, masked
“ from observance, and attempting the
“ violation of her chastity. Fired with
“ indignation at their barbarity, I in-
“ stantly forced a passage through the
“ hedge, followed by my servant, and,
“ drawing my sword, commanded them
“ to desist from their inhuman purpose,
“ and to stand upon their defence.”

whom, from his voice, I knew to be
Gaylove, “ retire! Avoid this place;
“ for ruin spreads here her gloomy
“ wing; stir another step, and your life
“ shall answer for the bold intrusion.”

“ Heedless of his threats, I rushed
“ forward, the cowards pointing each his
“ sword at my breast: Gaylove’s thrust
“ I fortunately parried, and at the same
“ time disarmed his Lordship, who im-
“ mediately retreated. His accomplice,
“ who thrusted at the same time, was
“ more successful than his Lordship;
“ his sword, passing under my right arm,
“ slightly entered my breast; but, be-
“ fore he could pursue the thrust, a blow
“ from my faithful servant, with an
“ oaken trowel, brought him to the
“ ground.

“ FINDING

“ FINDING our opponents thus fortunately subdued, I hasted to the object of their cruelty, and, with the assistance of my servant, raised her from the ground: soon to our hopes the springs of life returned, and the crimson dye of nature suffused her pale, wan cheeks; but ere her mind resumed its wonted serenity, she expressed in trembling and imperfect accents the horrors of her agitated breast.

“ As soon as she was sufficiently recovered, we led her from the gloomy recesses of the grove, and conducted her to a small cottage at the foot of the hill, the inhabitants of which we were about to rouse, when, through loss of blood, I fainted; at the same time,

" time your approach anticipated our
" wants, and coveyed us to this safe re-
" treat." Then turning to Belfield, " I
" cannot," says he, " finding myself
" thus far happily recovered, retire to
" rest, till I have completed the work
" in which I am engaged: the friends
" of this unfortunate girl, whose minds
" at this moment are doubtless filled
" with fear for her safety, must be in-
" formed of her situation. It is the of-
" fice of humanity to soothe the afflic-
" tions of our fellow creatures, and par-
" ticularly of those who are the votaries
" of virtue. To you, my dear Bel-
" field," continued he, " I resign this
" commission, conscious that your be-
" nevolence and friendship will derive
" peculiar pleasure from the execution
" of it."

BELFIELD cheerfully accepted the trust, and, by Sir Charles's desire, stepped out of the room, to usher in the rescued fair one, who had retired with one of the servants to adjust her dress, which her assailants had much disordered. He soon returned, accompanied by the injured girl, and, presenting her to Sir Charles, "Here, my "friend," said he, "is the lady, for "whom you made enquiry, and who is "indebted to your bravery and hu- "manity for the preservation of her "life, or, what is more valuable, her "virtue."

My eyes were instantly fixed upon her; never did I behold such a combination of innocence and beauty.— Her dress was rustic simplicity, ar- ranged

ranged by the hand of neatness. A light brown stuff jacket, with a coat of the same texture, trimmed with pink riband, inclosed the most graceful form I ever saw; a neat straw hat, adorned with the same coloured riband, closely tied beneath her chin, half concealed her beautiful face. The crimson tints of native modesty improved the blooming beauty of her cheeks, while the tears of sensibility, glistening in her jetty eyes, eclipsed the lustre of those animative diamonds.

ADVANCING to her deliverer, she fell on her knees; the tears which flowed from her lovely eyes suppressing the organs of speech, with a look of gratitude she expressed her thanks. Sir Charles, taking her hand, desired her

to rise, and, seating her on the settee, requested to be informed who she was, and by what unlucky accident she fell into the hands of those wretches, from whom he had happily rescued her.

“ I find myself,” said the fair sufferer, “ too weak to indulge your kind request with the full recital of my misfortunes, the remembrance of which is lost in my thanks to heaven and you for my safety, and my anxiety for my poor parents, whose bosoms are at this moment pierced with double anguish for the safety of their child, and the misery of their situation.”—Here she wept bitterly, and, as soon as she recovered herself, thus proceeded :

“ LORD

“ LORD GAYLOVE, to whose arti-
“ fice I had nearly fallen a victim, when
“ your humanity snatched me from the
“ dangerous precipice, was landlord to
“ my father, who, by a train of acci-
“ dents, which neither the eye of cau-
“ tion could foresee, nor the hand of
“ care prevent, was driven from the
“ cheering sunshine of prosperity to the
“ gloomy shades of poverty and distress.
“ His Lordship, taking advantage of his
“ misfortunes, offered such proposals
“ for the discharge of his pecuniary
“ obligation, as I must ever remember
“ with the utmost horror, and which his
“ honesty treated with just contempt;
“ he was, in consequence, driven from
“ his farm, forlorn and destitute—

‘ The world was all before him, where to choose
‘ His place of rest, and Providence his guide.’

“ One of his labourers, compassionating
“ his misfortunes, opened his hospitable
“ door, to receive and shelter us from
“ the changeful seasons. Here, by their
“ industry, my parents supported their
“ family, and taught us by their example
“ to earn content. Returning this even-
“ ing from the village, where I had been
“ to purchase some necessaries, I was
“ forcibly seized by two ruffians in dis-
“ guise, hurried into a carriage, and con-
“ veyed to the spot, where you, led by
“ the direction of Providence, found
“ and saved me from destruction.”

“ AND your name,” said Sir Charles,
“ is”—

“ WELFORD,” she replied.

• “ SUCH

"SUCH were my apprehensions," said Sir Charles; "called forth by the voice of friendship to assist the father, and led by chance to the protection of the daughter, the event has anticipated my designs.—This hand," continued he, presenting to her the letter, "you may possibly be acquainted with."

"ACQUAINTED with!" she exclaimed, pressing the paper to her lips; "yes, it is my Stanley's. Generous youth! though forbid to see me by the commands of a cruel father, you still are striving to alleviate my grief.—This, Sir," said she, "is the hand of Charles Stanley, the farmer's son of that name, who is a tenant of yours; we were reared together from our infant state,

" and have constantly lived in habits of
" intimacy, till about six months past,
" when he was forbid to visit our fa-
" mily, because of our adversity: when
" we lived in plenty, the farmer was
" continually professing the most ex-
" alted friendship; but now we are re-
" duced, and stand in need of assistance,
" like the swallow that flies the varying
" season, he unfeelingly deserts us."

" MERCENARY wretch! unfeeling
" man!" exclaimed Belfield. " This
" same old Stanley," said he, turning
to Sir Charles, " is a man to whom I
" have been particularly partial; I al-
" ways viewed him as an honest man,
" and have ever been forward in pro-
" moting his interest; but this treatment
" of the honest Welford cancels every
" good

“ good opinion I have entertained of
“ him, and I shall henceforth treat him as
“ one undeserving my protection. But
“ come, Sir Charles, we delay; I will
“ seek this unfortunate family, and ease
“ their anxiety; I feel myself deeply
“ interested in Welford’s behalf, and
“ am resolved to snatch him from his
“ present wretchedness, and fix him in
“ a state where the frowns of adversity
“ will not be able to affect him.”

“ In which laudable design,” said Sir Charles, “ I need not intimate my rea-
“ diness to join. My doors are always
“ open to the wretched; and I never
“ experience such happiness, as when I
“ am succouring the distressed, and re-
“ lieving the unfortunate. Haste, my
“ friend, and convey the poor sufferers

“ to my dwelling; here they shall reside,
“ till a suitable habitation be provided
“ for them.”

“ How shall I express my thanks,”
said the grateful girl, “ for such un-
“ bounded generosity, such unmerited
“ friendship? But a generous action is
“ its own reward, and conveys a plea-
“ sure to the virtuous breast, which
“ the most studied panegyric cannot
“ effect.”

BELFIELD's carriage was in readi-
ness, and he set out with alacrity, to
find the dejected family of the honest
Welford.

AT the close of the evening, it seems,
Welford, being alarmed at the long ab-
sence

sence of his daughter, walked towards the village, to meet her. He enquired of every one he met, whether they had seen her; none could give him any tidings: and, after going to the place whither she had been sent, and spending many hours in a fruitless search, he returned to the cottage, big with the idea, that the detested Gaylove had intercepted her, and by force effected his base designs. His wife became almost frantic at the thought; and the little ones, seeing their father in tears, hung round him with filial fondness, and wept, as it were, by sympathy.

IN this situation did Belfield find the dejected Welford, administering to his afflicted family that consolation which he himself stood so much in need of.

On his entering the cottage, the good man arose from the bed on which he was reclined, and exclaimed, "Mr. "Belfield! By what means, Sir, are "you led to a scene so wretched as this "which meets your view? Has any "accident befallen you, or"——

"No, my good old fellow," interrupted Belfield, "no stroke of chance has led "me here; Heaven was my guide, "whose messenger I am, to drive from "your habitation the black despair that "now surrounds you. Dry up your "tears; the object for whom they flow "is now in safety; your virtuous daugh- "ter, snatched from the hands of vil- "lains, is safe beyond the power of "harm, and waits impatient to behold "her friends, to appease their storm of
"grief,

“ grief, and hush their sorrows in affection’s warm embrace. Come, my old boy,” continued Belfield, “ and you, the affectionate partner of his grief, my carriage waits to conduct you to her; your little ones too shall go; their presence will complete the scene of joy: from this dreary mansion let us haste to some more grateful spot, where adversity no more shall interrupt your peace, nor damp the flame of virtue struggling in your breast against the united force of poverty and oppression.”

WITHOUT waiting for a reply, Belfield hurried the whole family into the coach, and ordered the servants to drive with all possible speed to Sir Charles’s.

AFTER

AFTER recovering from the astonishment impressed on his mind by the relation given by Belfield, Welford made enquiries into the particulars of his daughter's situation; which Belfield was scarce able to satisfy, before the carriage stopped at the door. The impatient Charlotte, hearing its approach, flew to receive her parents, and, rushing into her father's arms, fainted away; a little assistance soon recovered her, and she by turns embraced them all. And here would I fain describe the joy that overspread their grief-swoln cheeks, the gratitude that sparkled in their eyes, and which spoke the transports of unsullied virtue; but language, conscious of her weakness, shuns the attempt, and leaves conception, the truest painter to a feeling mind, to trace the glowing scene.

AFTER

AFTER receiving the thanks of this honest family, Sir Charles, by the advice of his friends, retired to rest, and the company soon after followed his example; where I shall leave them for the present, and defer the sequel of my tale for another letter, as the limits of my paper will not admit its full recital, and the post, who is waiting below, has exceeded his time.

LETTER

LETTER XVIII.

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME.

GRENVILLE.

FATIGUED and weary as I was from my sudden indisposition, I found myself by no means inclined to sleep.—The adventures of the night had made an indelible impression on my mind.—The benevolence, bravery, and humanity of Sir Charles, the honesty and gratitude of the suffering Welfords, added to the friendship of the amiable Belfield, formed a subject worthy of contemplation. Fancy was too wakeful, and imagination too powerful, to admit the approaches of so unwelcome

a vi-

a visitor as the drowsy god would at this time have proved.

METHINKS, Matilda, I hear you, with an arch smile, say, "I might with equal justice have added the penchant of the dear Sir Charles to the number, as a subject not the least attractive."— I confess it: and indeed an attempt any longer to conceal my attachment would now be in vain, as I have given, though in a singular manner, sufficient proofs of its existence: the dear youth has urged the theme, nor could I hesitate to confess the conquest he had made.

THESE and a thousand other fond ideas beguiled the tedious hours of night, a night perhaps the happiest I ever spent: the pangs arising from an anxious

anxious doubt, that often nips in the bud each infant joy the hand of fondness raises, that checks the ardour of our rising bliss, and pours on the glowing embers of soft-smiling hope the most aconite poison, such pangs found not a dwelling in my breast: there pleasure spread her downy wing, and gently fanned my growing passion.

IN this state I lay, when Aurora undrew the curtains of the night, and the sun's bright beams painted with tints of gold the misty mountain's top. The tuneful lark had left her mossy couch, high in the vaulted sky upraised, to hail with matin strains the blushing morn: the early hind had left his peaceful cottage, and reassumed the labours of the field: refreshed nature disclosed collective

lective beauties to the view, and every eye in the village beamed with joy.

THE entrance of Mrs. Belfield roused me from my meditation. She was the messenger of joy, and brought me happy tidings, that the wound received by Sir Charles was so trifling, as not to occasion the least confinement; that he had left his chamber some hours, and was waiting, with the rest of the company, my attendance to breakfast. I obeyed the summons with alacrity, and speedily accompanied Mrs. Belfield into the parlour. On my entering, Sir Charles, rising from his seat, saluted me with much kindness, and, handing me to a chair, impatiently enquired how I found myself after the perturbation into which I had been thrown.

At

AT breakfast Seymour informed us, he had considered the situation of Welford, and had formed in his mind a plan for his future establishment. "Stanmore," said he, "my steward, who is now far advanced in years, has several times intimated a wish to resign his office, the duties of which are become too laborious for his age. The abilities of Welford are in every respect calculated for the employment; and therefore, Belfield, by your leave I will appoint him to succeed Stanmore, who will be happy of the opportunity to retire."

BELFIELD approved the plan proposed by Sir Charles, and said, as he had generously provided for the father, he would study to reward the virtues of
the

the daughter, by facilitating her union with the honest Stanley. "I have," said he, "a farm now upon my own hands, the management of which I will give to the young couple, whose industry, I doubt not, will find it a comfortable subsistence."

IT was then proposed we should make a morning's excursion to the steward's lodge, and afterwards return to Seymour-house to dine; this meeting with general approbation, we immediately proceeded on our walk.

THE lodge is situated at a small distance from Sir Charles's, across the park; in the walk to which the most delightful prospect presented itself to view. A wide, extensive country on

one

one side, interspersed with small villages, aspiring groves, meandering streams, and fertile plains; and on the other, the swelling ocean, on whose bosom, wafted by propitious gales, adventurous barks, rich with the treasure of the world, exulting rode; varying objects in the beauteous scene met and charmed the wandering eye. In such a happy spot, formed for the cultivation of love, and with such a man as Seymour, do not, Matilda, wonder at my happiness.

WE were received by Stanmore with much respect and courtesy: Sir Charles informed him of his intention to accept his resignation, and that he had appointed Welford to succeed him. The good old man received the intelligence with

with a great deal of pleasure, and highly commended the choice he had made.

IN the agreement between Stanmore and the late Sir William Seymour, there is a clause, which binds Sir William and his heirs, in case of Stanmore's becoming, through increase of years, incapable of discharging the duties of his office, to allow him an annual stipend of one hundred pounds during life; to this Sir Charles has added the gift of a handsome new-built house, that stands at the bottom of the park, by the side of the canal, which Stanmore in a few days will take possession of; in the mean time Welford and his family are to remain at Seymour-house, till the lodge is made ready to receive them.

HAVING

HAVING thus executed the business we were engaged in, after partaking of some refreshments with which Stanmore had provided us, we returned to the mansion, where we found farmer Stanley and his son waiting our arrival, for whom a messenger had been dispatched by Belfield in the morning.—The farmer was desired to walk into the parlour. His countenance betrayed his conscious guilt. Belfield addressed him on the inhumanity of his conduct to the honest Welford, and his cruelty to his son, whose duteous attention, he said, deserved from him the most extensive indulgence.

THE farmer expressed his sorrow for the fault which he had been guilty of, and promised, by his future friendship for

for his neighbour, to make ample restitution, and added, that as soon as he was able to situate his son, he would consent to his union with Charlotte.

"GIVE but your consent," said Belfield, "and I will provide the rest."

THE farmer said he gave his consent freely; and that, if he ever expressed his disapprobation to their acquaintance, it was because there was no prospect of their establishment in life.—Here Belfield rung the bell, and ordered the servant to conduct Welford and his daughter into the room, and also to send in young Stanley.

OLD STANLEY, on Welford's entering the room, cordially shook him by

the hand, and, in the presence of the whole company, he declared that a reconciliation with his old friend gave him more joy, than if his worship, Sir Charles, had presented him with a quarter's rent. Welford accepted his compliment with a smile of pleasure, and said it was the only thing that could increase his present happiness.

WHEN Charles entered the room, his eyes were instantly riveted on the beautiful Charlotte, and, regardless of those present, he ran and clasped her in his arms, with all the ardour of honest truth. Charlotte met his fondness with becoming modesty, and with equal warmth returned his love; the tears of joy involuntry started in their eyes, and
their

their bosoms heaved with the sigh of gladness.

BELFIELD rose from his seat, and taking the hand of each, with the consent of their parents, united them, and mentioned the situation in which he intended to place them. Sir Charles presented them with an hundred pound note, to purchase stock for the farm, and said he had given orders to have the wedding celebrated at his house, and desired they would agree as to the day.—“Tomorrow,” said he, smiling, “if you please.”

CHARLES looked at Charlotte with extreme fondness, and asked her to name the day.—“Tomorrow shall it be?” said the impatient youth.—Her

blushes gave consent.—I offered my service to attend the bride; “and I, “ Stanley,” said Sir Charles, “will ac-“ company you.”—The parties then re-
tired to make preparations for the mor-
row.

SIR CHARLES, immediately after they withdrew, taking me by the hand, thus addressed me.—“ To say, Clarissa, that “ I love you, would but be repeating a “ declaration I have often made, the “ sincerity of which your own sen-“ timents must do me the justice to be-“ lieve: then say, sweet maid, does not “ the example of the fair Charlotte “ soften you?”

“ WHAT shall I say, Sir Charles?”
I returned, striving to conceal my
blushes.

blushes. “Accept my hand, my willing heart has long been yours.”

“Thus, then,” said he, throwing his arms round my neck, “I seal the compact;” and turning to Belfield, “Joy, my dear friend, give me joy; the charming Clarissa smiles upon my love, and kindly yields to the wishes of my heart.—And shall tomorrow, too, be our day, Clarissa?” continued he.

“Not so hasty, Sir Charles,” I replied; “you have another’s consent yet to gain, or not a jot of my fortune will you be able to touch for some considerable time.”

“O! Clarissa,” said he, looking on

me with passionate fondness, "do not
"think so meanly of me, as to imagine
"the want of fortune can impede our
"union, or in the least diminish my af-
"fection.—Fortune! out upon it: it is
"the bar between heaven and the
"wealthy. My ancestors (thanks to
"their care!) have left me a plenty;
"but, did I possess the riches of the
"east, my happiness would still be im-
"perfect, if you refused to share them
"with me. But come, Clarissa," con-
tinued he, "we will leave the appoint-
"ment to Mrs. Belfield."

"Not so either, Sir Charles," I re-
turned; "if you continue in the same
"mind, and my temper change not,
"this day month you may call me
"yours."

"TILL

"TILL then it is a world of time," said he; "but I am obedient to your wishes."—Mrs. Belfield and myself then retired to dress for dinner, and Sir Charles and Harry took an airing in the phaeton round the park.

AT dinner Sir Charles resumed the subject of our marriage, and warmly pressed me to name a shorter period; nor did he ask in vain: the feelings of my own heart too warmly pleaded his cause, to permit a refusal, and before the hour of rest I consented to be his on that day fortnight.

ON account of being bride's maid, the fair Charlotte was this night my bed companion, whose wakeful attention roused me early to the duties of my of-

fice. By eight o'clock she was completely attired, and a few minutes after we went down stairs, where we joined the company. Charles met his bride with the smiles of pleasure, and saluted her with much cheerfulness; nor would his gallantry let me escape the compliment. He was dressed in a plain blue coat, and had on a fancy tamboured waistcoat, from the needle of his bride. His auburn locks in beautiful ringlets hung with careless negligence over his shoulders, the bloom of health was seated on his cheeks, and his sparkling eyes borrowed new lustre from the rays of joy.

CHARLOTTE's dress was a plain white lustring, which Mrs. Belfield presented her with; and she wore on her head a
dress

dress cap, ornamented with a wreath of artificial roses. The simplicity and elegance of her attire gave additional beauty to the natural graces of her person. Fresh blooming as the morn, when Aurora, emerging from the liquid main, first gilds the horizon with her roseate beams, and gives the painted landscape to the view, the enamoured Stanley led his yielding fair one, thus adorned, to Hymen's altar, at which they were united in the holy bands of wedlock. The day was spent in the greatest harmony; and in the evening, in our way to Belfield's, we left the happy couple at their new habitation.

THUS, by the exertions of benevolence and friendship, a deserving family are saved from wretchedness and want,

and a virtuous pair made happy.—Would all who boast the favours of fortune follow the example of these amiable friends, Poverty would soon be extinguished in the British realm, and the name, stripped of its terrific sound, alone remain.

BEFORE this has reached you, I suppose the enamoured Bygrove will have told his tale of love, and realized his passion.—I herewith send an “*Ode to Friendship*,” from the pen of that gentleman, “*humbly inscribed to the fair Matilda*,” and wrote with a pencil on the wainscot of the summer-house. It escaped our observations till this evening, when your friend, Mrs. Belfield, having proposed to drink tea there, the gallant Sir Charles, who formed one of the

the party, espied it. He thinks it a happy composition, and says, if the carping critic should discover in it any inaccuracies, he ought to be candid enough, when he reflects on the cause that stimulated its author, to suspend his censure, and

“ Piece out its imperfections with his thoughts.”

You may probably see me the latter part of this week, as Sir Charles has offered his chariot for my conveyance to town.—The inclosed letter I will thank you to deliver to my good friend, your father, as it apprizes him of my engagement with Sir Charles; and the paternal kindness which he has invariably shewn me, since I was committed to his care, justly entitles him to my confidence.

ODE TO FRIENDSHIP.

HUMBLY INSCRIBED

TO THE FAIR MATILDA.

NO more Ambition fires my breast,
I feel her flutt'ring pulse supprest,

And Reason is my guide;

No more I yield to Foily's sway,
No longer tread her devious way,

Misled by shallow pride.

Far nobler thoughts my breast extend;
At FRIENDSHIP's hallow'd shrine I bend,

And dedicate my muse.

Hail, sacred Friendship! child of truth!

Accept the praise of votive youth,

Who thy firm bliss pursues.

Say, Goddess, in what happy spot,
In Grandeur's dome, or lowly cot,

Must I thy seat explore?

Or dwell'st thou with the rich and great,

Or in the rustic lone retreat,

Among the simple poor?

Dost

Dost thou, where flatt'ring wiles abound,
Diffuse thy blessed influence round ?

Look'st thou with kind regard,
Where TRUTH and VIRTUE yield to gain,
And patient Merit seeks, in vain,
A suitable reward ?

Oh ! rather shun the Court's proud blaze,
The cringing Courtier's servile praise,
And all perfidious guile ;
Remote from Envy and Deceit,
From Folly's train, vain Pride and Hate,
I court thy cheering smile :

“ Where Truth and Virtue stand confest,
“ Fixed inmates of MATILDA's breast,
“ Thou reign'st with ev'ry charm,
“ Ease, Innocence, and Joy serene,
“ Unvarying gild the peaceful scene,
“ And ev'ry care disarm.”

When grief and woe oppress the mind,
In THEE a lenient balm we find,
For each corroding smart :
In vain Distress her power employs,
To interrupt the sacred joys
Thy purer flames impart.

By

By thee supported, we sustain
Misfortune's grief, Affliction's pain,
And ev'ry human woe.—
Blest Amity! whose praise I sing,
From whom our greatest pleasures spring;
And all our blessings flow.—

Long may I feel with grateful sense,
And own the bliss thy flames dispense, —
In all my actions blend;
Grant me that virtuous pow'r to gain,
“ To raise the joys, or share the pain,
“ Of each deserving friend.”

LETTER

LETTER XIX.

MR. BYGROVE TO MR. BELFIELD.

BEECH-GROVE.

THE relation you have given me of the generosity of your noble friend, Sir Charles, towards the honest Welford, and the success of his passion for the fair Alton, affords me an unspeakable pleasure. Her amiable disposition well accords with the sincerity of his heart; and they may doubtless look forward with the pleasing hope of enjoying a long series of uninterrupted happiness. In their voyage of Hymeneal love may they sail—

“ On the smooth surface of a summer sea.”

SINCE

SINCE my arrival here from Grove-hall, I have addressed a second letter to my friend Courtall, on the subject of his attachment to Matilda, and requested an immediate answer.—After having waited till my patience was quite exhausted, my request unnoticed, I determined to make a tender of my passion to the mistress of my affections. Here, too, the same silence prevails; and, though I have dispatched the third letter, am still combating the storms of perplexity. My resolves now are to visit London, and personally learn the cause of this profound secrecy, that disguises, I am fearful, some momentous event.

TOMORROW's dawn lights me on my journey, in which I shall be accompanied

panied by the once blooming Hargrave and her rosy boy, the fruits of her amour with this profligate, this libertine, Courtall, whose heedless thoughts hurry him on to the commission of crimes that startle humanity with horror. I am, however, sanguine in my hopes of reforming this lawless rover. From our childish years we were bound together in the social bands of friendship; the progress of his life I have marked with an attentive eye, and through many irregularities have discovered a benevolence of soul, a generosity of sentiment, that combated the sallies of vice, and veiled his faults, or made them appear less dangerous to the view.

THE following circumstance led me to the discovery of his infidelity to Miss

Har-

Hargrave. My friend Seaford called upon me some few days back, and proposed a morning's ramble in search of some woodcocks, which he had for several days together seen hovering round the neighbouring groves; to which I assented, and preparing myself for the excursion, we set out in pursuit of our game.

AFTER coursing to and fro for many hours, and meeting with very little success, I thought of returning home, the eagerness of Seaford to pursue his sport having entirely separated us: but being much fatigued, I sat me down on a shady bank, by whose side a small rivulet, gliding its silver stream in murmuring accents, invited me to repose. I insensibly dropped into a gentle slumber,

ber, and, on my awaking, found myself considerably refreshed.

I THEN began to recollect whither my sporting excursion had carried me; when taking a perspective view of the country before me, the delightful village of —— caught my eye, towards which I directed my steps.

THE serenity of the evening rendered my walk delightfully pleasant, and the harmony of the tuneful choir, responsive from the neighbouring groves, heightened its enjoyment.— Over flowery meads and moss clad hills I bent my jocund way, contemplating the beauties of nature, and gazing with admiration on her luxurious charms.

THUS

THUS thoughtful as I roved, a sudden storm roused me from my reverie, and drove me for shelter to a small cottage, nearly obscured by a row of lofty poplars, which just had caught my passing eye.—When I had reached the door of this lonely dwelling, I beheld a lovely boy, heedless of my approach, amusing himself with the sportive tricks of a young kitten, which he had upon his lap: instantaneously struck with the near resemblance he bore to Courtall, I fixed my eyes upon him in an attentive gaze; still he perceived me not, but undisturbed pursued his infantile mirth.—Extending my view within the cottage, I saw attired in the humble garb of neatness and simplicity a female, whose observation I had also escaped, looking with endearing fondness on the child.

child. My entrance, however, disturbed those ideas of pleasing melancholy which she seemed to be indulging. I bowed respectfully, and thus addressed her: "I trust, Madam, you will pardon
"the boldness of a stranger, who, be-
"wildred in his way, and fatigued with
"toil, thus rudely intrudes himself into
"your habitation, to crave of your hos-
"pitality a moment's shelter from the
"impending storm."

SHE politely handed me a chair, and desired I would be seated, adding,
"There needs no apology: that you
"are the friend of my beloved, though
"cruel, Courtall, is a sufficient claim to
"my protection."

AT these words I started; and, look-
ing

ing earnestly in her face, discovered the once lively features of the unfortunate Hargrave.—“Good God!” I exclaimed, “is that the form, I now behold, of the fair Cleora?”

“ ALL that remains of that wretched girl, you view in me,” she replied; and, taking a hand of the child’s in her own, “Here, Mr. Bygrove,” she continued, “is the fruits of your friend’s licentious passion. View him well; is he not a near copy of the worthless original? Possess not his cheeks the same lovely bloom? Beam not his eyes with the same unrivalled lustre and bewitching sweetness? Oh! he is my only comfort, my every joy; his endearing smiles awaken in my breast the transports of a mother, and soften “ the

"the cruelty of his unnatural sire."—Then clasping the infant in her arms, she eagerly pressed him to her bosom: from either eye affection dropped a tear, and bedewed those pallid cheeks, now withering in despair, where once the whiteness of the snowy lily, blended with the blushes of the damask rose, to beauty's smiles gave birth, and disclosed the bloom of rosy cherub health.

HAVING been assured by Courtall, that his engagement with Miss Hargrave was rendered void by mutual consent, I requested her to relate the history of her unfortunate attachment.—She immediately complied, and, seating herself on a chair by my side, gave me the following narrative:

BEFORE

“ BEFORE Courtall’s departure from
“ hence, failing in an attempt upon my
“ virtue, he prevailed upon me to con-
“ sent to a private marriage, which was
“ effected through the assistance of a
“ friend of my lover, a gentleman from
“ one of the Universities. My uncle
“ (with whom I then, and since the
“ death of my parents, had constantly
“ resided) disapproved of our acquaint-
“ ance, which consequently made this
“ precaution necessary, to the com-
“ pletion of our happiness.—For some
“ considerable time he appeared pas-
“ sionately fond of me, and was constant
“ in his visits, which were always held
“ in privacy: I afterwards observed him
“ to become gloomy and reserved; his
“ hours of absence were extended to a
“ greater length, and, at last, finding
“ our

"our amour could no longer be concealed, on account of my being far advanced in a state of pregnancy, he took the resolution of leaving the country, and of abandoning me to the insults and reproaches of an unnatural relation, who no sooner became acquainted with my situation, than he banished me from his house, to wretchedness and want.

"IN this situation my misery admitted of some consolation, in the consciousness of my own innocence, and in the belief that I really was the lawful wife of my base betrayer. But, alas! this auxiliary of peace was but of short duration: the ungrateful Courtall, hearing of my situation, wrote me this note,"—drawing from

her pocket a small book, she took from it a letter, which she unfolded, and read as follows:

‘ TO CLEORA HARGRAVE.

‘ HEARING that your uncle has
‘ banished you from his house, I am in-
‘ duced, through motives of friendship,
‘ to offer you a small gratuity, to answer
‘ your present necessities, and have in-
‘ closed for your acceptance a twenty-
‘ pound note.—I doubt not but your
‘ uncle will soon be reconciled, and
‘ again receive you under his friendly
‘ roof: in the mean time, I would have
‘ you relinquish your supposed claim
‘ to the title of wife to me, as the person
‘ who performed the ceremony, though
‘ the licence was a legal one, was in-
‘ competent

* competent to add efficacy to the transaction, as having never received ordination.

* Yours, &c.

* G. COURTALL.*

"THE effect," continued the fair sufferer, "this letter had upon me, almost deprived me of my senses: I fainted, and fell lifeless on the floor: it had been happy for me and my wretched infant, had I not revived, but had sunk, with all my sorrows, to the friendly grave.—When I recovered from the disorder into which this additional proof of my lover's ingratitude had thrown me, I enquired for the person who had brought me the unwelcome information: but I was informed that he withdrew immedi-

“ ately on my fainting.—I then endeavoured to trace out my seducer, but could obtain no other intelligence than that he had precipitately left the country, without communicating to any one the place of his intended residence.—Thus failing in my discovery of the perjured wretch, I endeavoured to support my sufferings with all the fortitude I could command; and being ashamed to meet the companions of my innocent days, I sought this recluse spot, where I have lived in secret from the world, save to those neighbouring cottagers, who are strangers to my misfortunes.

“ My uncle, softened by repeated entreaties, has forgiven my offence, and every quarter conveys to me a sum of money, sufficient to support myself

“ self and child, but will not be pre-
“ vailed upon to see me.”

“ By heaven! Cleora,” I exclaimed,
“ the base betrayer of your innocence
“ shall make you ample restitution, and
“ confirm the title of which he would
“ deprive you, or he shall add to the
“ number of his crimes the murder of
“ his friend.—Yet will I use the soft
“ persuasions of friendship, to procure
“ you justice; and I think the sight of
“ this lovely infant will revive in his
“ heart his former love, and recall his
“ wandering steps to the paths of vir-
“ tue.”

“ O! lead me,” she cried, “ to his
“ presence; let me, while I draw the
“ vital air, once more behold his lovely

“ form : in one last and kind embrace
“ let me clasp him to my bosom, and I
“ will cease to think him cruel, nor
“ once repine at all my miseries past.”

“ AND indeed, Cleora,” I replied,
“ you shall see him. In a very few
“ days I shall set out for London, whi-
“ ther you and your infant shall accom-
“ pany me; in the mean time, if it meets
“ your approbation, you shall instantly
“ quit this solitary cell, and make my
“ mansion your present abode.”

“ BUT did you not talk of murder?”
she said. “ Do not affright me with
“ the repetition of that horrid sound.
“ Abandon the idea of compelling him
“ to be just. If he loves me, he will
“ not want compulsion to discover it;
“ and

“ and if he hates me, I would not add
“ to my wretchedness the thought of
“ interrupting his happiness.—No; let
“ some more happy, artful fair share
“ with him the sweets of hymeneal bliss:
“ I shall not envy her the joy.—Mi-
“ sery is become habitual to my mind;
“ and my soul has been too long im-
“ mured in the gloomy caverns of de-
“ spair, to feel a sharper pang than what
“ ingratitude has given it.”

HER generosity charmed me, and won me to her entreaties.—She then collected a small parcel of necessaries, and, securing the door of her cottage, conducted me across some fields to a small inn, where we procured a post-chaise, that conveyed us to my habita-

tion, from which we were distant some nine or ten miles.

I KNOW not what kind of a reception we shall meet with from Courtall, nor how he will digest my interference in this business; but I am determined, if he refuses to make that restitution to the fair sufferer, which is vested in him, to expose to the world his base ingratitude.

LETTER

LETTER XX.

SIR CHARLES SEYMOUR TO MR.

LOVEMORE.

SEYMOUR-HOUSE.

I THANK you, my dear friend, for the part you have taken in settling with Mr. Friendly the preliminaries of my intended union with the lovely Alton; and as every thing is agreed upon, to the mutual satisfaction of all parties, I hope in a short time to be in the possession of what constitutes the whole harmony and pleasure of my life—the incomparable Clarissa.

YOUR apology for leaving the kingdom,

dom, without attesting the completion of my happiness, was quite unnecessary. My own sentiments too strongly figure to my imagination the pangs that rend your distracted mind, to wish your presence at a scene, the sight of which would but serve to augment their keenness.

I SHALL leave this place a few days sooner than I at first intended, that I may have the pleasure of seeing you before your final departure: nor suspect my truth, Lovemore, when I say, that, next to the presence of the adored Clarris, your society was a blessing my soul most valued.

THE natural disposition of your mistress, Mrs. Belfield says, is generous and

and humane: but these virtues, she adds, are too often rendered inactive, by a propensity to variety, and an excess of pride.—Her mutability, she believes, originates more in the opinion she entertains of her personal graces, than in the wish to be ungrateful.—This, I must confess, is a character, in discriminating which, while justice wields the rod of censure, we cannot in some degree refuse the tribute of applause.

IF some regimen could be found, to purge her mind of vanity's baneful passion, her dormant virtues would doubtless be called into action; your constancy would then meet its just reward, and the rival of your love receive the contempt due to his dissembled passion.

IF I might advise, I could wish you to postpone your intended journey a few weeks; something in that time may probably occur, that will remove the cloud of anguish from your brow, and reestablish you in the favour of your mistress.—Believe me, Lovemore, were she but convinced how small a share of confidence her admirer merits, she would banish him from her thoughts, and return a proselyte to your arms.—But why do I advise? The mind unaccustomed to the pangs of disappointed love, and a stranger to its miseries, can but faintly conceive the anguish it creates.

AFTER all, the dictates of your own heart will be the best guide. If absence will cure your distemper, or in the least alleviate

alleviate your concern, it is the only step prudence can suggest. But if, on the contrary, it will augment your sorrow, and heighten the ardour of your passion, the converse of your friends cannot fail of being the most salutary alternative.— Adieu.—In a few days you may expect to see me.

LETTER

LETTER XXI.

MATILDA FRIENDLY TO MRS.

BELFIELD.

LONDON.

THE absence of our family, who are gone out in the chariot for a morning's airing, has given me an opportunity to communicate a few scattered thoughts to my dear Belfield. It will convey no small share of pleasure to the breast of my friend, when I assure her I have entirely surmounted my passion for the gallant Captain. At present that gentleman is on a visit to his regiment, whither he was called on some particular occasion. Narcissa, you may be assured

assured, is rather dull on the occasion; though I believe, were he never to return, it would not long disturb her quiet.—I am sometimes led to believe, of her two lovers, that Lovemore has the preference in affections; and, if her obstinacy could be confuted, she would again accept his addresses, and that in earnest too.

I AM rather, Belfield, perplexed, as to the silence of Bygrove.—But why perplexed, you will say? Did I expect to see him in the character of a lover? Why, no indeed; I did not indulge that idea when I left Grove-hall; but I must confess it has since got possession of my mind, and, in spite of my wish to displace it, still retains its seat.

I CER-

I CERTAINLY entertain a strong partiality in his favour; and to be ingenuous with you, my friend, of all the men I ever saw, I know none to whom I would so soon resign my liberty, as the amiable Bygrove. Alton frequently rallies me upon this subject, and says she is sure the same day (near as it is) that unites her to her beloved Seymour, gives to me the worthy Bygrove.

AT this moment my maid informs me a stranger below enquires for me.—I shall resume my letter, on my return.

* * * * *

OH, heavens! Clarinda, who do you think this stranger is? Why, in good truth, the very man I was so freely discoursing

coursing of—Bygrove himself.—He has given me the melancholy tale of Miss Hargrave's misfortunes, the which, he says, you are now no stranger to.—What a detested wretch is this Courtall; but I trust his infamy will, in this circumstance, meet with a check. Narcissa will not, surely, disregard the sufferings of this injured woman. This discovery will certainly ruin Courtall in her affections, and reward the constancy of Lovemore.—My hopes presage the event will be happy.

ILL treated as Bygrove has been by this seeming friend, he still retains for him the most exalted friendship.—His candour imputes all his crimes to the heedless impetuosity of youth, and ob-

serves

squares his faults in the praises of his virtues.

I HAVE promised him, as soon as I have finished this epistle to you, and arranged my dress, to accompany him to the fair sufferer and her infant (who are now at a private house in the city) to convey them hither; I shall therefore lose no longer time in closing this letter, than in assuring you I am inviolably your sincere friend.

LETTER

LETTER XXII.

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME.

LONDON.

AGAIN, my dear Belfield, I resume the pen, to treat upon the subject of the injured Hargrave. I am sure you feel a desire to be informed of her fate, and sincerely sympathize in her misfortunes.

MR. BYGROVE conducted me to the lovely mourner, whom we found endeavouring to divert her sorrow with the engaging prattle of her little boy. She rose, on our entering the room, and Mr. Bygrove advancing, introduced me
as

as a person in whom she would experience the sincerity of a real friend.

A LANGUID paleness overspread her countenance, and figured a countenance of woe. Her eyes, which are blue, have lost their lustre in the clouds of sorrow, and a settled melancholy is visible in her whole deportment. Her little boy, who is the very resemblance of his father, is the most beautiful child I ever saw. The little prattler has a most engaging tongue, and seems in that respect also, the emblem of his sire.

MR. BYGROVE had given her an account of our family, and the footing on which Courtall was with it, not omitting his pretended penchant for Narcissa and myself; and being likewise informed

formed of the Captain's absence, she readily accepted the invitation of returning with me.

WHEN we reached home, which we did not before the family's return, I conducted Miss Hargrave and her son into my apartment, as I intended to keep her in privacy, till an opportunity offered of unfolding her tale, that might, in some measure, effect the reformation of Narcissa. This I communicated to Bygrove, who highly approved my scheme.

THE fatigues of her journey had greatly depressed her spirits, she found herself extremely weary, and after having taken some little refreshment, retired to rest. I then hastened to Bygrove, whom I had

I had left in the parlour, but found he had strayed into the garden, whither I directed my steps. He had seated himself in the pavillion from which he observed my approach, and immediately advanced to meet me.

“ YOUR fair friend, Sir,” I said, “ fatigued and weary, has sunk into a gentle slumber, which I hope will recruit her spirits, for they are at present greatly depressed indeed.”

“ ACCUSTOMED,” said he, “ to misery, and habituated to misery, she is hopeless of ever tasting happiness again, and therefore you must not expect to see in her the smiles of pleasure; yet I trust,” continued he, “ her grief will find considerable relief

“ in

“ in the society of the generous Matilda ;
“ and I strongly hope, that the force of
“ friendship will lessen the ardour of
“ her passion ; and, by degrees, remove
“ the anguish that afflicts her mind.”

“ SHE has,” I replied, “ no small
“ apprehensions on your account. The
“ haughty spirit of Courtall, she fears,
“ will not brook reproof, and that his
“ impetuosity, opposed to your resolu-
“ tion, will hurry you into an act that
“ may prove fatal to both. She trembles
“ for the consequences.”

“ I HAVE pledged my honour,” he
returned, “ not to provoke the desperate
“ means she intimates, to obtain her
“ justice. If her own sufferings, added
“ to the persuasions of friendship, are not
“ sufficient

“ sufficient to awake compassion in his
“ breast, and recall his fondness, I shall
“ hold him unworthy my regard, and
“ abandon him to the pangs of a guilty
“ conscience, which must, ere long,
“ awake with all its horrors.”

“ A PUNISHMENT,” said I, “ which
“ in my opinion, is far more severe than
“ the forfeiture of life.”

“ No punishment, Matilda,” he re-
plied, “ can be adequate to the crime of
“ seducing unguarded innocence ; nei-
“ ther the torments of guilt in this life,
“ nor its sufferings in the next, can
“ repay its baseness. Woman by na-
“ ture gentle, affectionate, and kind,
“ formed to sooth the harsh asperities
“ of life to soften care, and raise the
“ drooping

“ drooping head of pain, to lull the
“ beating pulse of misery, to calm the
“ tempest of ferocious passion, and har-
“ monize the soul, cannot be too much
“ esteemed; and the man whom heaven
“ has blessed with such a partner, may
“ think it an earnest of its future fa-
“ vor.”

“ AND yet I fear, Bygrove,” said I,
“ you over-rate the virtues of our sex.
“ Where in this age of pride and folly,
“ will you find a woman of your de-
“ scription?”

“ O! many, many,” he replied, “and
“ such an one has gained the ascendancy
“ of my heart. O! Matilda, forgive my
“ impatience, if, breaking through the
“ restraints of diffidence and fear, I thus

“ prostrate myself at your feet, and yield
“ my heart a willing offering at the shrine
“ of virtue.—Your amiable virtues have
“ won my affections, and I am taught,
“ from the sincerity of my passion, to
“ believe, that without an equal return
“ of love, my happiness is for ever lost.”

O, BELFIELD! how shall I describe
my sensations, on hearing the generous
youth pronounce this declaration ; a
declaration so congenial to my wishes,
and which I had so anxiously antici-
pated.—Words cannot do them justice,
nor can the conception of any one, but
such as have experienced a similar joy,
describe my happiness. I could not
conceal my emotion, nor did I strive
to hide my passion; it would have been
folly to have attempted it; my blushes
confessed

confessed it, my eyes did not deny it,
and my smiles confirmed it.

IT was now that he disclosed the suspicion he entertained of Courtall's intercepting his letters, which he had addressed to me on the subject of his attachment; this conduct of the Captain's, I confess, much puzzles me to guess at the motives which stimulated it, unless it was to conceal his designs upon me; and I am the more inclined to believe it was for that purpose, as Mr. Bygrove says, he had professed to him an attachment for me.—How vile! How ungrateful! The seduction of the daughters, was to have been the return for the hospitality of the father.

AFTER walking several turns in the garden—

—“ And talked the flowing hour,
“ Or sighed, and looked unutterable things”—

we were interrupted by the arrival of the family, to whom I introduced Mr. Bygrove, as the friend of Belfield.—My father received him as such, and with his wonted hospitality. — Miss Alton, after paying her respects to Bygrove, retired to dress for dinner, as did also Narcissa ; the former I followed, and briefly related the history of Miss Hargrave, and the manner in which I intended to introduce her ; after which I repaired to my own room, where I found the strangers risen from their sleep, and much refreshed.

MISS HARGRAVE wished to dine in
my

my room, and begged me to postpone her introduction to the family till after that ceremony below stairs should be ended, to which I readily assented, as it was what I had meditated. This arrangement I communicated to Bygrove, who engaged, as soon as the table was uncovered, to call the attention of the company to the narrative of Miss Hargrave, after which, it was agreed I should introduce her.

As soon, therefore, as the dessert was placed upon the table, Mr. Bygrove requested the attention of the company to a subject he had to discourse of, in which he conceived the happiness of our family was materially concerned. A profound silence ensued, the attention of all was roused, and every eye fixed

upon Bygrove. He then, with much address, related the sufferings of the unfortunate girl, which he painted in so pathetic a manner, that none could restrain the tear of sympathy ; and depicted the villainy of her betrayer in such a forcible style of eloquence, as roused the indignation of his hearers.

THE remainder of the business now became vested in me, and I rose with alacrity to bring the proofs of my lover's assertions.—I quitted the room, and in a few moments returned with Miss Hargrave in one hand, and her son in the other. The doubts of those to whom this tale appeared in the least degree mysterious, were now silenced : conviction had stamped her image on every countenance,

tenance, and compliments of condolence were offered by all.

NARCISSA I observed with much attention, and saw the blush of shame mantle in her cheeks. — “ Good “ God!” she exclaimed, “ into what a “ gulf of misery had I been plunged “ but for this timely discovery.—In me, “ Madam,” said she, addressing herself to Miss Hargrave, “ you behold one who “ is a sharer in your misfortunes, but my “ passion was a guilty flame, and is de- “ servedly punished; I will henceforth “ devote myself to your service, and “ strive, by the tender offices of friend- “ ship, to alleviate your distress.—But “ how, my dear Sir,” continued she, turning to my father, “ shall I be able “ to look you in the face; how shall I

“ repair the fault my rashness has
“ been guilty of to the best of parents ;
“ and how shall I dare to meet the eyes
“ of that generous man, whose bosom
“ has been wrung with my unkindness ?
“ The injuries of Lovemore press upon
“ my mind, and figure to imagination
“ the injustice of my conduct.—Too
“ long have I been estranged from the
“ paths of justice, too long has levity
“ beguiled my giddy thoughts ; but if
“ contrition, sincere as my conduct has
“ been unjust, can make atonement ; if
“ to despise the base betrayer of my af-
“ fections can effect restitution, my re-
“ formation shall be as speedy as my
“ crimes have been meretricious.”

“ Your candour, my dear,” replied
her

my father, " in acknowledging your error, and your resolution to repair your fault, is to me a sufficient atonement, and you need be under no apprehension that your lover will despise your penitence ; you hold, Narcissa, too dear an interest in his heart for him to indulge resentment, or refuse your returning love."

" THUS far," said Bygrove, " fortune favours my designs ; and I doubt not, Cleora, but to reinstate you in the affections of Courtall. He is not by nature vicious, and his breast still cherishes some amiable virtues."

" YET I am fearful," returned the dejected fair one, " your generosity will meet with many obstacles from the

“ corrupted manners of Courtall, that
“ may impede its success.”

“ AND should your fears, Cleora,”
he replied, “ prove true, I doubt not,
“ with the assistance of these surround-
“ ing friends, to administer consolation
“ to your griefs ; to wean your mind
“ from its unhappy attachment, and
“ teach you to despise the wretch, who
“ can behold, unmoved, the spoils of
“ his licentious passions.”

HERE the entrance of a servant, who brought a letter for Bygrove, which he said, came by an express, threw us into some little confusion, which was considerably heightened by the apparent agitation with which he perused it.

“ An

“AN affair,” said he, “of the utmost importance, in which the fate of my exertions is centered, claims my absence from this society; but I leave it with the less regret, in the confidence I place in the hospitality of my friends, and particularly in yours, Matilda, that the sufferings of this injured woman, will be the objects of your compassion.” — A few days will probably restore me to your company, and bring the reward which suffering virtue merits.— ‘Till then, seek not to enquire the cause that calls me hence, for not ‘till then can it be revealed.’”

THIS declaration prevented the enquiry which every one present was about to make, and Bygrove was suffered to

depart without any further conversation on the subject.

REVOLVING and debating with each other, the cause that required his sudden departure — the arrival of Lovemore withdrew our attention, and opened a new vein of conversation, the particulars of which I shall defer 'till to-morrow's post.—'Till then, adieu.

LETTER

LETTER XXIII.

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME.

LONDON.

IMPATIENT to communicate to my friend the happy intelligence of a reunion between Lovemore and his mistress, I shall dedicate a short portion of that time, which is allotted for our repose, to that purpose.—The family are all retired to rest; and the silence that prevails affords me an opportunity of collecting my thoughts, and arranging in order the chain of circumstances that form this eventful history.

At that particular period which records

cords the departure of Bygrove, and the arrival of Lovemore, I have to resume my tale.

THE entrance of the latter was as unexpected as the exit of the former, though not so difficult to be accounted for.—Narcissa, on seeing him enter the room, was covered with confusion, and rose to retire, when Lovemore thus addressed her :

“ Do not, Madam, suffer my presence to interrupt your pleasures, nor drive you from the society of your friends.—’Tis true, I came to seek you, but I do not wish to detain you long. The terms on which we met were those of friendship, nor ought those of our parting to be any other.

—I know

“—I know full well, Narcissa,” continued he, “that your heart, though hurried reluctantly into the vortex of fashion, cannot cherish enmity; nor will the goodness, which it boasts, suffer you to despise the man, whose only fault was, that he loved too well, too fondly loved, to enjoy repose.”

“BUT that I fear,” said Narcissa, “my unguarded levity presents me to your eye an object of scorn, and has robbed me of every particle of favour I once might hold in your esteem, I should bend myself with penitence at your feet, and ask forgiveness.”

“AMAZEMENT!” exclaimed Lovemore. “Can this be real, or do I dream? Speak, Narcissa, to my suspicious

“ pious fears, and ease me of my
“ suspense.”

“ I, LOVEMORE,” said my father,
with a smile, “ can remove your doubts,
“ and confirm your warmest wishes.
“ Narcissa has seen her imprudence,
“ and blushes at her folly. Your for-
“ giving nature cannot, I am sure, re-
“ fuse a pardon, which candour sues
“ for. But if you suspect her sincerity,
“ and doubt her words, she is ready to
“ yield herself to your custody, as the
“ hostage of her fidelity.”

“ THEN forgive me, Narcissa,” said
Lovemore, “ if I refuse your promise,
“ since the rejecting of it conveys to
“ my longing arms the dearest treasure
“ of my life, and ensures to my heart
“ those

“ those blessings, which all the world
“ unwearied pursues, peace, content,
“ and happiness.”

“ HERE then,” said Narcissa, “ I
“ give my hand, in earnest of my truth;
“ and if, hereafter, you should find that
“ indifference, with which I have treated
“ your passion, converted to extreme
“ fondness, you must not doubt its sin-
“ cerity; as my heart, freed from the
“ shackles of folly, will now be bound-
“ less in its love.”

“ OH! never fear me,” he replied;
“ doubt not that I shall avoid the quick-
“ sands of jealousy.—Besides, I mean
“ to love to that excess that shall pre-
“ vent suspicion.—But tell me, to whom
“ am I indebted for this happy turn of
“ for-

“ fortune? Is your reformation the effect of your own heart, or has some virtuous example wrought this miracle in you?”

“ THE detection of falsehood,” replied Narcissa, “ and the generosity of your own passion, have been chiefly instrumental in effecting my conversion.— “ The misfortunes of this lady,” continued she, pointing to Miss Hargrave, “ who unfortunately has fallen a victim to that apparent honesty which first estranged my affections, have roused me from that dangerous slumber, which the artifice of your rival had imposed upon my senses, and have brought me back a convert to reason and sincerity.”

“ Oh,

“ OH, happy period!” he exclaimed,
“ thrice blessed hour! which bids the
“ streams of sorrow cease to flow, and
“ gives thee back to my despairing
“ arms.—But let me not, through ex-
“ cess of joy, forget the sufferings of
“ oppressed virtue.—The melancholy
“ tale of this much injured lady has
“ reached my ear. To my friend Sey-
“ mour I am indebted for the informa-
“ tion.—But where is her generous ad-
“ vocate? and where, oh! where, is he
“ who should repair her injuries? Let
“ us, Narcissa, join in the virtuous
“ pursuit: from misery’s dismal cell let
“ us snatch desponding innocence, and
“ from the guilty haunts of vice recall
“ misguided youth.”

“ AND can you, Sir,” said Miss Har-
grave,

grave, “ forgive the injuries the disseminated passion of my betrayer has done you? Can you forget the anguish which it caused, the grief that almost assimilated you into madness, and robbed your heart of every beam of joy? O yes, you can, I know; I read forgiveness in your eye; your looks are placid, and disclose the candour of your soul.—Heaven will reward your virtue; such exalted goodness softens the pangs of wretchedness, and brings even to my desponding mind the dawning of long banished joy.”

“ IF,” said Lovemore, “ the harmony of this family, in the short acquaintance you have experienced, can have alleviated aught of that anguish which envelopes your heart, what may we

“ we not hope for, from a continued
“ enjoyment of their friendship, even
“ though your lover should remain un-
“ moved by your sufferings?”

“ LONG accustomed to misfortune,”
she replied, “ and hopeless of regaining
“ the affections of my lover, I am pre-
“ pared for disappointment. In the
“ calm retreats of solitude, reflection has
“ impressed upon my mind some valu-
“ able lessons, which I trust will not
“ escape me in the busy haunts of men.
“ Assured of the protection of Provi-
“ dence, it is ours implicitly to obey his
“ will, nor impiously to question the
“ justice of his decrees.—To the friend-
“ ship of this family,” she continued,
“ I am much indebted for the present
“ calmness of my mind; to their bene-
“ volence

“ volence is to be attributed the super-
“ pression of my sorrows, and the please-
“ ing prospects of returning happiness;
“ and if I cannot adequately express
“ my gratitude, my heart is deeply im-
“ pressed with a sense of their hu-
“ manity.”

CONVERSATION, of this nature, em-
ployed the remainder of the evening.—
Every one present strove to alleviate
the anxiety of the amiable Hargrave;
nor were their endeavours fruitless: she
already appears to have resumed some
part of that serenity, which, Bygrove
says, in her happier days, she was wont
to possess, but not in a manner that in-
dicates a forgetfulness of her situation.

My father and mother are not, you
may

may suppose, a little happy at the reunion of Lovemore with Narcissa.— The generous Alton also equally shares with me their happiness.

How pleasing, Belfield, are the emotions which virtue excites in the human breast! To gratify a selfish and inordinate passion, who, possessed of reason, would desert the paths of rectitude, and barter substantial bliss for transitory pleasure, or uncertain joy? How few would taste misfortune's bitter cup, did mankind prefer the dictates of reason to the impulses of desire! The paths of life would be found less rugged, if the force of passion yielded to the calm direction of prudence. The attacks of vice would then meet with a successful resistance,

and

and intemperance would be lost in the exertions of benevolence.

THESE reflections more forcibly impress my mind, from the contrasted examples of virtue and immorality exhibited in the two friends, Bygrove and Courtall. The one, stimulated by a desire of extending happiness to the breast of every individual, enjoys within himself the most perfect harmony; while the other, hurried on by a heedless impetuosity, tears from the brow of every one he meets, the smiles of pleasure, while he himself, no gainer by their loss, labours beneath the most agonizing torture.

ANY farther communication of this
in-

interesting business must wait the return of Bygrove. The cause of his absence, while it creates in the minds of our family matter of surprise, occasions in my breast the most anxious solicitude for his return.—To Alton only I have revealed the secret of his passion for me; to her friendship I am infinitely obliged, and she has an unlimited claim to my confidence.

Twice has the sun performed his diurnal course, since my lover's departure; may his third rising light him to my presence, or convey to my anxious mind the knowledge of his being. With this invocation I resign my pen, and fly to my pillow for repose—in the gentle arms of sleep to suppress my fears, and hush the tumults of my breast.—Adieu!

LETTER XXV.

MR. COURTALL TO MR. BYGROVE.

BEFORE this shall have reached you, the friendly hand of death will have for ever closed these eyes, whose aching sight can but faintly view the guidance of the pen; and my agonized soul, freed from the miseries that now oppress it, shall have reached “*that undiscovered country, from whose bourne no traveller returns.*”

Oh, Bygrove! to what a desperate state has the indulgence of my licentious passions reduced me!—Too late I see, with

with sad regret, the injustice of my conduct. My crimes are of that destructive kind, that will admit of no extenuation; and it were impious to hope for mercy. No soothing balm can heal the wounds of complicated guilt, nor aught enliven the gloomy prospect that darkens to my view.—Despair has banished from my breast every faint ray of cheering hope, and holds in its adamantine chains my woe-oppressed mind.

SHOULD the messenger, whom I have dispatched with a letter to Beech-grove, requesting your immediate presence here, be unable to meet with you, or should your arrival be protracted beyond the limits of my melancholy fall, I have arrested those few remaining moments to tell you of my penitence.—

And when, Bygrove, as it shortly will be—when this guilty form is lodged within the narrow confines of the gloomy grave, let that affection, which you bore me, draw a veil over my crimes, and forgive the injuries I have done you:—let memory blot from her tablets the remembrance of my follies, and cherish with fond regard those virtues, which your generous friendship implanted in my breast.

A SHORT time back I received orders to join my regiment, encamped at this place. The sun, which rose to light me on my journey, never cast his beams on one more happy than I esteemed myself. The goddess, Health, revelled in the bloom of youth, and sportive pleasure reigned in my bosom

som with unbounded sway. Each rising morn, the witness of my bliss, roused me from the embraces of invigorating sleep, to quaff the stream of joy; and each succeeding eve led me to the downy couch, while happiness strewed her garlands on my pillow, and watched my peaceful slumbers.—But, oh! how changed the scene! those happy hours are for ever vanished:—those transient pleasures are buried in the shades of guilt, and every moment increases the pangs of hopeless misery and unceasing torment.

FIR ED by the lustre of fair Julia's charms, my heart indulged a guilty flame, and panted to possess the beauteous maid.—In love's assumed attire I won her easy heart, and lulled, with

studied artifice, the suspicions of her breast.—One fatal eve, flushed with the grape's pernicious juice, I met the lovely nymph directing her lonely steps along the windings of a gentle stream, that softly murmured over its pebbly bed. Beneath the western waves the sun had sunk from view, and gentle zephyrs fluttered in the air—the tuneful thrush had sung her evening's song, and over the eastern clime the silver moon in borrowed light majestic rose.—Thus careless as we strayed, our wandering steps had reached a lonely shade, a grotto formed by nature for the rites of love; here, on the mossy bank, our wearied limbs we awhile reclined, attentive to Philomel's harmonious lay. Emboldened by the kindness of the artless maid, I rudely clasped her lovely form,

form, and pressed her to my beating breast, while on her lips I impressed the language of my guilty love.—Struggling as in my arms she lay, her bosom heaved the sigh of confusion, the blush of indignation mantled in her cheeks, and her eyes flashed with rage.

“VILLAIN!” she exclaimed, “unhand me.—Is this your ardent love? “Are these the proofs of your generous “passion?—Blush, worthless wretch, at “your impiety, and dread the anger of “vengeful Heaven!”

“No more, sweet Julia,” I replied, “urge this perverseness. To love and “pleasure be this hour assigned. The “time and place invite us to the sports

"of love, and the passing moments
"chide us for delay."

"INHUMAN monster," she returned,
"let go your hold!—Ye heavenly pow-
"ers, ye guardians of innocence and
"virtue, protect me from the cruelty of
"this determined villain; or, in pity to
"my sufferings, let the friendly hand
"of death snatch me from the impend-
"ing ruin that surrounds me."

INDULGENT Heaven heard her
prayer; for at that moment two cot-
tagers passed the grove, and, breaking
from my hold, she flew with eagerness
towards them, fell on her knees, and
implored their protection; while I, cow-
ard as I was, retreated with the utmost
pre-

precipitation, and left unconquered innocence, untasted beauty, in the hands of rustic honesty.—This circumstance, had I possessed the least spark of honour in my breast, would, on reflection, have afforded me infinite satisfaction; but, lost to the ties of the one, and deaf to the remonstrances of the other, I violated the laws of hospitality to all mankind; and the examples of goodness served but to provoke, rather than appease, the turbulence of my passions.

As I sat ruminating in my tent on this event, my meditation was roused by the entrance of Julia's brother, a young officer in the same corps with myself, who rudely rushed in upon me, and, with a revengeful countenance, brandished his sword.—Flushed with the hopes of con-

quest, without endangering the life of my opponent, I snatched my sword from the table, and instantly began the assault. Twice did my successful arm parry his determined thrusts; but Heaven, who guards the innocent, and punishes the guilty, gave to his better arm the victory.—I fell the victim of its just resentment.—His pride refused to take the life I scorned to ask; and thus I am preserved to linger under the agonies of my wound, or, what is still greater torture, the torments of a guilty conscience.

BEFORE I quit this mortal stage, let me, while yet I have being, implore your friendly aid, to succour, from the oppressions of indigence, a virtuous and deserving woman.—She, to whom I allude,

Jude, is the once lovely Hargrave.—
The tale I imposed upon your unsuspecting ear, that we had parted on the terms of friendship, was a notorious falsehood. Will you believe me, Bygrove, when I tell you, that after imposing on her easy faith, by a feigned marriage, I fled, and left her to the mercy of a wretch, who, void of pity or affection, banished her from his house, to the insults of an unfeeling world.

ABANDONED by her friends, and deserted by him whose duty it is to protect and guard her from the scorn of fools, in some recluse and unfrequented spot perhaps she pines in solitude, and gains by the rugged task of labour, ill suited to her lovely form, her hard support; or, more cruel thought! oppressed by poverty

and want, she yields her beauty to the hire of lust, and, weeping, earns the bread of sad necessity.

If haply you shall find this injured girl, tell her that my dying thoughts were fixed on her; that I desired life only that I might repair the injuries my guilty love had done her; and say, to confirm her innocence, that our marriage, which then appeared to me as feigned, was strictly legal, and that the dear offspring of our loves can boast an honest birth.

To you, my dear friend, some apology ought to be offered for my having withheld from the fair Matilda those letters which you addressed to her on the subject of your attachment. I need
but

but say, I sincerely regret that ungenerous procedure, without disclosing its motives, to obtain forgiveness.—Something is also due to the generous Friendly, and the injured Lovemore; but my spirits, weary and exhausted, claim the soothing balm of rest: perhaps it may be my last slumber; my eyes no more may view the taper's glimmer; the morning's light may break to me in vain, and all the world be sunk in endless night!—“*Farewell! remember me!*”

LETTER

LETTER XXVI.

MR. BYGROVE TO MATILDA FRIENDLY.

TO alleviate any anxiety which my sudden departure may have occasioned in the breast of the mistress of my affections, and her amiable family, I embrace the earliest opportunity of communicating the particulars of the cause which occasioned it.

THE letter which called me from you, was from the hand of Courtall, and requested my immediate presence on a matter of the utmost importance at this place.

place. From the person who was intrusted with the care of it, I gathered some faint information of the cause which required my attendance, and that intimated the necessity of speed.

AFTER a few hours hard travelling, I reached S—, and was immediately conducted to Courtall, whom I found under the hands of the surgeons of his regiment, in consequence of a desperate wound he received in a duel with a young officer. It originated in an affair of gallantry, the particulars of which are contained in the enclosed letter of the Captain's, which he had with much difficulty written, on finding the messenger (whom he had dispatched to Beech-Grove) detained, and the apprehensions entertained by the surgeons

geons of the improbability of his recovery.

He at this moment exhibits a melancholy picture of intemperance, and forcibly demonstrates the effects of licentious folly.—“ Oh, Bygrove!” said he, clasping my hand with great earnestness, and looking at me with a countenance expressive of the most sincere contrition, “ had I listened to your “ friendly admonitions, and trod the “ paths thy virtuous precepts pointed “ out, I had escaped the horrors of the “ present hour, and soared superior to “ the envenomed darts of misery.—But “ not to me alone has my guilt con- “ veyed the pangs of wretchedness; the “ bosoms of my friends feel the force “ of my ingratitude. The hospitable
“ Friendly,

" Friendly, the injured Lovemore, the
" unsuspecting Narcissa, and the vir-
" tuous Matilda, all have suffered,
" through my imprudence; nor has
" your own unguarded heart escaped
" the wound.—For these unprovoked,
" unmerited injuries, how can I hope
" for pardon? Will ye not all join in
" execrating the guilty wretch, and view
" me struggling in the pangs of accu-
" mulating misery, without a sigh of
" pity or regret?"

By repeated assurances I have con-
vinced him, how happy your family will
be, to view his reformation, and how
alert in pardoning the errors of his con-
duct.—Every apparent danger of his re-
covery being entirely removed, I have
ventured to disclose the residence of
the

the injured Hargrave, together with the whole narrative of her life, from the moment he deserted her, to the time I discovered her solitary retreat, and also the motives which induced me to convey her to town.—It would be impossible to describe the pleasure my information afforded him, or the impatience he discovers to behold his long abandoned wife, and yet unseen child. All attempts to detain him here were vain; and as I see no danger in his removal, I shall not attempt it. To-morrow, if he suffers no relapse, we shall begin our journey, which in two days, by easy stages, we shall be able to complete.—This information you will communicate to the family, and also submit to their perusal the accompanying letter, the contents of which will establish

the

the title of Miss Hargrave to the name of Courtall, and remove from her breast every impression of anguish and despair.

AND now, Matilda, permit me to say something on the subject of my affection for you.—In these few hours of absence, I have fanned the embers of my growing passion with the gentle breezes of enlivening hope, and, sheltered from the chilling blasts of fear, the grateful blossoms of increasing fondness flourish in my bosom. Imagination has supplied the place of reality, and affection has impressed on my heart the form of the fair Matilda in traces indelible:—no harsh suspicions break upon the tranquil harmony of my soul; my mind, unclouded by apprehension,
and

and steady in its attachment, views elate
the prospect of approaching bliss, and
fondly anticipates the happy hour that
shall bring thee to my presence, and
realize the force of fancy.

LETTER

LETTER XXVII.

MATILDA FRIENDLY TO MRS.

BELFIELD.

LONDON.

THE inclosed letters, which I have just received from my lover, will reveal to you the particulars of the cause which so suddenly robbed me of his company, and also inform you of the success of his endeavours in behalf of oppressed innocence.—Mrs. Courtall (for as such she must now be called) received the intelligence of her husband's reformation with tears of joy; and the only anxiety, that now clouds her mind, is a fearful apprehension for his recovery.

SIR

SIR CHARLES SEYMOUR arrived at the same moment the happy information reached us, and participates largely of the general joy. Alton is extravagant in her rejoicings, and declares I shall also have occasion to be boundless in those of mine.—Thursday, which is fixed for the celebration of the nuptials of her and Sir Charles, is also to complete the happiness of Lovemore and Narcissa.

THE gaiety of Seymour received a considerable check this afternoon, from Alton declaring, in a serious manner, that she had changed her mind, and would not be married on the day which was fixed.

“IT is impossible,” said my father,
“now

“ now to recede from your engagement;
“ every necessary preparation has been
“ made, and you will recollect you have
“ executed the marriage contract.”

“ WHAT, my dear Clarissa,” said Sir Charles, with an air of much concern,
“ can you in this short time have altered
“ your disposition to make me happy?
“ Is there any wish resident in your
“ mind, that has not been complied
“ with? If there is, name it, and it shall
“ be satisfied.

“ IT is not in your power, Sir
“ Charles,” she replied, “ to obviate
“ my objections. It remains solely
“ with Matilda, whether, or not, I shall
“ be yours on Thursday.”

“ WITH

“ WITH me, Clarissa!” I exclaimed;
“ how with me? If I can by any means
“ facilitate the happiness of Sir Charles,
“ there is no one will be more ready in
“ doing it.”

“ WHY then, positively,” she replied,
“ unless you are married on Thursday,
“ neither will I.”

“ THESE conditions,” said Sir Charles,
“ are indeed, Clarissa, very hard. It
“ is an objection that cannot be re-
“ moved.”

“ No, indeed!” said she, “ but you
“ are mistaken; is he not, Matilda?”
turning to me, and laughing in my face.
“ Do you not perceive,” continued she,
“ how the poor girl blushes? her very
“ coun-

" countenance tells you that the thing
" is not only possible, but also very
" probable.—Come, Matilda," assuming
a more serious countenance, " the
man of your choice is one that you
need not be ashamed of; one who
adds to a handsome person and splen-
did fortune, the social virtues of be-
nevolence, hospitality, and friendship;
to whose timely exertions the present
happiness of this family is to be attri-
buted; and, having pronounced this
eulogium, there needs only to be af-
fixed to the picture I have drawn the
name of Bygrove, to confirm its just-
ness."

" How, Matilda!" said my father,
" have you engaged your affections
without consulting me?"

¶

" When

“ WHEN the amiable virtues of Mr. Bygrove,” I replied, “ impressed my heart with a partiality in his favour, you were too far distant for me to receive your advice, before they had completed their conquest. But if the indulgence of my passion meets not your approbation, I will strive to suppress it, though I must confess the task will prove somewhat difficult.”

“ No, my dear,” returned my father, “ rather strive to augment your love, than diminish it. Your choice merits my approbation. But tell me, has Mr. Bygrove declared his attachment?”

“ He has,” I replied, “ and won from me

“ me a mutual acknowledgment of affection. The attempt to disguise the feelings of my heart would have been vain. To the impulses of sincerity I yielded the specious wiles of dissimulation, and without reserve confirmed the wishes of his heart.”

“ WHY then, indeed,” said Sir Charles, “ the thing is feasible enough. But I must confess the proposition startled me, on its first appearance.”

“ OH, Sir Charles!” I said, “ you were unnecessarily alarmed. Clarissa well knew the objection would not affect her happiness, or she would have suppressed the mention of it. Believe me, she is equally tenacious

"with yourself of the approaching
"day."

To you, Belfield, I may without reserve disclose the dearest secrets of my heart, and boast those blessings which most my soul esteems. The passion of the generous Bygrove is a theme my tongue is never weary in discoursing of; his exalted worth conveys to my breast the sensations of pleasure and delight, while the approbation of my friends to our union establishes the permanency of my bliss, and drives from my mind every anxious fear.

IMPATIENT for his arrival, I count the lazy moments as they fly, and chide the delay of the lingering hour that shall bring

bring him to my anxious arms. To-morrow he will arrive.—Lie still, my beating heart! thy fears will soon be hushed, and all thy tremor sunk in endless joy.

LETTER XXVIII.

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME.

LONDON.

IT is past, my friend!—The clouded moments of despair are flown, and joy infuses in our breasts her pleasing power:—happiness again revisits our gloomy mansion, and soft smiling peace, arrayed in silver vestments, reigns in our bosoms with unbounded sway.

THE interview between Courtall and his amiable wife produced an affecting scene; the sensations, which it excited in the breasts of those who beheld it, are familiar only to the virtuous, and cannot

cannot be conceived, but through the aid of heartfelt sympathy. Your mind, Belfield, enriched with every social grace, will readily conceive the tremulous joy of the happy Cleora, and trace, in ideal form, the happiness which the repentant Courtall experiences in his return to love and virtue.

THE approach of the two friends was announced by a servant, who was sent forward for that purpose, about an hour before their arrival. The tremor which this information imposed upon us, though an event which every one anxiously waited for, is hardly to be conceived. Mrs. Courtall with much difficulty was preserved from fainting; and the whole family were busily employed in striving,

by the most cordial expressions of esteem, to support her spirits.

At length the much expected moment arrived. Mr. Lovemore entered the drawing-room, where we were assembled, and announced their arrival: almost immediately after, Mr. Courtall, leaning on the arm of his friend, followed. Mrs. Courtall, on seeing him, sunk into the arms of Alton and Narcissa. The tears of returning love beamed in the eyes of Courtall, whose extreme weakness prevented him from affording any assistance to his amiable consort. A few moments recalled her fleeting spirits; again she turned her eyes upon the object of her affections, and leaned to meet his kind embrace.—

A pause

A pause of some length ensued—a vacuum, in which the forms of tenderness and love were more forcibly pourtrayed in the silent gaze and cordial embrace, than the most specious eloquence could have expressed.

“ AGAIN, my dear Cleora,” said Courtall, “ my guilty arms encircle thy lovely form; again I press thee to my beating breast, and gaze with rapture on thy beauties:—but oh! how undeserving of the bliss! how unmerited this happiness!—Long, my Cleora,” continued he, “ has folly misled, by her alluring wiles, my heedless steps; and, while my giddy passions chaced imaginary bliss, the faithless shadow sunk from view, and gave to my grasp the pangs of wretchedness:—no more her

“ false, delusive smiles shall lead me
“ from the paths of virtue; thy con-
“ stancy and truth shall henceforth di-
“ rect my steps, and teach me where to
“ look for peace.”

“ THEN am I happy,” replied the generous fair. “ Oh, Courtall! many are the anxious moments I have passed, since that fatal morn you left me to the mercy of a rude, unfeeling world: no beam of hope e'er shed its happy influence on my dismal way, where darkness, guilt, and wretchedness inclosed my steps, and banished from my mind the soothing balm of peace.”

“ YES, chide me, Cleora!” he exclaimed: “ chide me with severity; it is

“ is what my guilt deserves. I will patiently endure thy just reproof; and, when thou hast done, I will kneel, and ask for pardon.”

“ Oh! do not think,” she returned, “ I meant to wound your ear with the mention of my griefs; my sorrows now are hushed: this happy moment obliterates from memory’s record the remembrance of my woes, and wipes the tear of anguish from my eye.”

“ Oh, thou sum of every bliss! thou paragon of excellence!” he replied, “ how shall I repay thy goodness as I ought? how reward thy generous faith, thy unsullied virtue, and thy constant love?—But where, Cleora, is the infant of our loves? where is my boy?

“ Oh! give him to a longing father’s
“ arms, and let me clasp him in my fond
“ embrace.”

“ AND see, my love,” said the fond
mother, pointing to the child, as I led
him towards Courtall, “ where he comes,
“ to meet your wishes. He looks like
“ the lovely form of innocence, con-
“ ducted by the radiant hand of virtue.”

“ HERE, Sir,” said I, presenting to
him the child, “ to complete the happi-
“ ness of the present moment, I give to
“ your arms this rosebud of beauty,
“ nourished by affection’s smiles in the
“ grateful soil of virtue: take him to
“ your heart, and teach him, by your
“ future conduct, to shun the allure-
“ ments of vice.”

“ SUCH,

“ Such,” he returned, clasping the infant in his arms, “ shall be my peculiar care.”—Then looking alternately at the infant and its mother,

“ Oh, Cleora! Oh, my child! I have been too long negligent of your loves,

“ and owe you much; much more,

“ I fear, than I shall be able to discharge: then take me wholly, mould me to your wills, and teach my erring steps, by your examples, to tread the flowery paths of happiness.

“ Oh, ye blessed gods!” exclaimed the enraptured Cleora, “ why did I ever doubt thy truth? How poor and weak is human nature, that every wayward passion should debase its judgment,

“ and lead mortality into doubt’s mysterious

“ terious shades! I blush to think how
“ little I deserve their favour.”

“ To the authors of our joy, Cleora,”
said Courtall, “ let us grateful bend the
“ knee, and own the blessings we derive
“ from the exertions of benevolence!
“ To you, Bygrove,” continued he,
“ the primary cause of this our present
“ happiness, and you kind friends, the
“ generous promoters of our bliss, we
“ are much indebted for your bounteous
“ friendship, which gratitude binds us
“ to acknowledge, and makes us anxious
“ to repay: but how? for me, recalled
“ by your exemplary conduct from the
“ scenes of vice, the warm effusions of
“ a heart stripped of its baneful passions,
“ and fraught with every social, new-
“ born virtue, that views with adoration
“ your

“ your exalted goodness, and that che-
“ rishes with grateful remembrance the
“ unrivalled lustre of your worth, make
“ me susceptible only of the tribute due
“ to your unmerited kindness, which
“ the eloquence of language is incom-
“ petent to express. Such thanks,
“ therefore, as we are able to offer, be
“ pleased to accept, and let our future
“ conduct prove the sincerity of our
“ professions.”

MR. COURTALL then addressed him-
self to my father and mother, on whom
he bestowed the highest eulogium for
their hospitality and friendship; ac-
knowledged the injustice of his con-
duct, and implored their forgiveness.—
To Narcissa and Lovemore he made
the like confession of his errors, and
threw

threw himself upon their candour for pardon.

“ AND now, Matilda,” said he, turning to me, “ your acceptance of my contrition is only wanting, to establish my happiness. Can you believe the penitence of him to be sincere, who could meanly feign a passion, to which his heart was a stranger; and who, by an ungenerous artifice, strove to supplant the affection of his friend?”

“ THE example of that friend,” I replied, “ in pardoning your crime, and his generous exertions in behalf of oppressed innocence, is not lost to the mind of Matilda; she views your reformation with pleasure, and shares with

"with those around her the happiness
"of the present hour."

"WHAT more," said Bygrove, addressing himself to Courtall, "can you wish? All here are friends; and all, with one accordant voice, hail your return to virtue.—And now, ye lovers," continued he, turning to Sir Charles and Lovemore, "let me congratulate you on the prospect of your approaching bliss. Your passions are crowned with success, your mistresses have kindly yielded to your wishes; nor am I, in that respect, less happy than yourselves; the generous Matilda sanctions with her blushes my affection, and confirms by her smiles my anxious hopes.—And you, ye parents," turning to my father and mother,

ther, " freed from that fearful anxiety
" which late possessed your breasts,—
" whose minds, illumined by the dawn-
" ings of returning happiness, view con-
" tent seated on the brow of virtue;
" whose benevolence softens the suffer-
" ings of the wretched, and raises the
" drooping head of misery, do ye ex-
" tend your generous assistance, to as-
" suage the fears of love, and give to
" my anxious arms the virtuous Ma-
" tilda; so shall I share your present
" joy, so will your daughter participate
" the transports of this happy hour."

" Informed of your attachment to
" my daughter," said my father, " and
" convinced of your sincerity, by this
" recent example of your virtue, in suc-
" couring the distressed, and reforming
" the

" the guilty, I cheerfully give to your
" care this latest pledge of paternal bliss,
" conscious that her happiness will de-
" rive additional pleasure from the af-
" fection of the generous Bygrove."

THUS then, Belfield, by the kindness
of my indulgent parents, and the gene-
rosity of my lover's passion, your friend
is rendered happy. No longer the
rough hand of anxiety tears from my
mind the half perfected hopes of love;
but, nourished by the cheering rays of
certainty, they expand their grateful
blossoms, and ripen to perfection.—
Away then with sullen fear! Care-
dispelling joy spreads her roseate smiles
around my brow, and pleasure plumes
in my breast her downy wings."

My father and mother, and the rest of our happy friends, desire me to entreat the presence of Belfield and yourself at the celebration of our nuptials; and as we rely much upon your acceptance of the invitation, we strongly hope not to be disappointed.

How different, Belfield, the prospect of the present hour to those but lately passed. Ere Bygrove found the amiable Hargrave's recluse retreat, little hopes were entertained of Narcissa's reformation; the generous Lovemore, a prey to the violence of his passion, was bewildered in the mazes of despair; and Courtall, stimulated by the love of pleasure, was lost to the emotions of goodness, and insensible to the charms of virtue.—From these examples of the indulgent

indulgent dispensations of Providence,
let not the chilling damps of misery extin-
guish in our breasts the generous
sparks of enlivening hope ; but let the
steady eye of faith view with serenity
the lowering tempest of adversity, and
await with resignation the bursting of
the storm—

“ Convinced,
“ That Heaven but tries our virtue by affliction ;
“ That oft the cloud, which wraps the present hour,
“ Serves but to brighten all our future days ! ”

FINIS.

